

URGENT ACTION

TWO MEN FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED

The fate and whereabouts of two members of Yemen's Baha'i community remain unknown following their arrest on 11 January. They have been denied contact with their families and lawyer, and are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Heshmat Alah Ali Mohammad Sabet Sarvestani, 75, and his son-in-law Nadim al-Sakkaf, 43, have been arbitrarily detained without charge and subjected to enforced disappearance since 11 January. They have been held incommunicado in an unknown location without access to their families or lawyers, raising fears they might be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

On 11 January, Nadim al-Sakkaf drove Heshmat Alah Sarvestani to the international airport in Yemen's southern city of Aden. Heshmat Alah Sarvestani was due to board a Yemenia flight to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, to renew his Iranian passport and receive medical treatment; Heshmat Alah Sarvestani is elderly and suffers from various medical ailments, including arterial hypertension-a rare form of high blood pressure, and a slipped disc. At around 2pm, while at the check-in desk, the two men were approached by an airport officer dressed in civilian clothing who ushered Nadim al-Sakkaf into an office for questioning. Hesmat Alah Sarvestani was called into the same office shortly after. Neither men have been seen since. The Yemeni authorities have refused to disclose their whereabouts.

Please write immediately in English, Arabic or your own language:

- Calling on the Yemeni authorities to disclose the fate and whereabouts of Heshmat Alah Sarvestani and Nadim al-Sakkaf and release them immediately and unconditionally, unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence, in line with international law and standards;
- Urging them to ensure that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and granted, without delay, regular access to their families, lawyers and any medical treatment they may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 MARCH 2017 TO:

Ambassador of Yemen to the US

H.E. Dr Ahmed Awad Binmubarak

Embassy of the Republic of Yemen in

Washington

2319 Wyoming Ave NW

Washington, DC 20008, USA

Email: Information@yemenembassy.org

Fax: +1 (202) 337-2017

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7589 3350

Email: admin@yemenembassy.co.uk

Salutation: Your Excellency



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 2015, Amnesty International has documented a number of incidents in which members of the Bahá'í community in Yemen were detained by the Huthi armed group, including those detailed below. The Huthis, mostly members of the northern Zaidi Shi'a minority, took over some army and security positions in Sana'a in September 2014. By the third week of January 2015 they had attacked military positions, the presidential compounds and government buildings. This led to President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi and his government resigning and the Huthis becoming the de facto administration of the capital and other parts of Yemen. Since then, the Huthis have maintained their hold on Sana'a and some parts of the country.

The arrest of Nadim al-Sakkaf and his father-in-law Heshmat Alah Sarvestani however marks the first time the organization has documented the arrest of members of the Bahá'í faith by the internationally recognised government of President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

Nadim al-Sakkaf and his brother Nader al-Sakkaf, 37, were previously arrested on two occasions. In March 2015, the two men were detained by Huthi authorities and interrogated about their faith and other members of the Bahá'í community. They were released without charge after two days. A year later, they were arrested again, on the afternoon of 10 August 2016. Earlier in the day, armed officers from Yemen's National Security Bureau (NSB), which works hand in hand with the Huthi authorities, stormed a Bahá'í youth workshop in Sana'a, Yemen's capital. They arrested 65 people, including six children, without warrants for arrest. Amongst the 67 people arrested that day were Ruhiyah Thabet and Nafha Sanai, the wives of Nadim al-Sakkaf and Nader al-Sakkaf respectively. Ruhiyah Thabet was released on 6 September after being forced to sign a pledge stating that she "will not participate in any Bahá'í inspired community service activities". Nafha Sanai was released on 21 August after she was also forced to sign a pledge stating that she "should not have any Bahá'í activities and should practice religion at home".

All but three of those detained on 10 August were subsequently released. Nadim al-Sakkaf and Nader al-Sakkaf (see UA 266/16 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde31/5191/2016/en/>) were arbitrarily detained for nearly four months before released without charge on 27 November. A third man, Keyvan Qaderi, 43, who was also amongst those arrested at the Bahá'í youth camp on 10 August, remains in detention in the NSB's Political Security Office (PSO) in Sana'a. He was held incommunicado at the NSB intelligence agency for the first six weeks of his detention before he was allowed a phone call to his family on 23 September. Officials from the NSB have threatened Keyvan Qadari and his family with deportation to Iran. As a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his religious beliefs and peaceful activities as a member of the Bahá'í faith, a religious minority in Yemen, Keyvan Qadari should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Keyvan Qadari was previously arrested on 20 June 2008 and held by the Yemeni government for four months, during which time he was at imminent risk of being forcibly returned to Iran. He was held incommunicado for 40 days and released unconditionally without charge on 23 October 2008, before being detained again on 10 August 2016.

Name: Nadim al-Sakkaf, Heshmat Alah Sarvestani

Gender m/f: both m

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