

URGENT ACTION

NINE YEMENI JOURNALISTS ARBITRARILY DETAINED

Nine journalists have been held arbitrarily by the Huthi armed group in Yemen since June 2015. They appear to have been detained solely on the basis of their journalistic work.

Nine Yemeni journalists, who work for a variety of news outlets, were taken from a hotel room in Sana'a, the capital, on 9 June 2015 and arbitrarily detained. They are currently held in al-Thawra pre-trial detention facility in Sana'a.

Abdelkhaleq Amran, Hisham Tarmoom, Tawfiq al-Mansouri, Hareth Humid, Hasan Annab, Akram al-Walidi, Haytham al-Shihab, Hisham al-Yousefi and Essam Balgheeth were working in a room hired out in Qasr al-Ahlam Hotel on al-Sitteen Street, Sana'a, when several armed men entered the room on 9 June 2015 at 4am. The armed men were dressed in a mixture of civilian and military clothing, and some had slogans on their weapons that are associated with the Huthi armed group and its political wing, Ansarullah. The journalists were initially divided and taken to two separate locations in Sana'a – al-Ahmar and al-Hasaba police stations – where some were allowed a brief phone call to their family. After two days, some of the men were transferred to the counter-terrorism department of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), where they were held for a month.

From mid-July to mid-September all of the journalists were held incommunicado in unknown locations; the families only learnt that they had been transferred to al-Thawra pre-trial detention facility from other prisoners who had been released from the same facility. Al-Thawra pre-trial detention facility is under the jurisdiction of the Huthi-aligned Ministry of Interior. Until recently, the detainees were only intermittently allowed to receive visits from their relatives, but they are all now permitted short visits every Thursday. The families of at least four of the journalists have said that their relatives were tortured or otherwise ill-treated at the CID, including being beaten and slapped during interrogations. Relatives of Akram al-Walidi have said that he suffers from a colon problem for which he was not provided medical treatment. Since the family was allowed to visit, they have been able to give him medication.

Some of the journalists work for news outlets that oppose the Huthi armed group, whilst others work for online news outlets that support the opposition al-Islah political party. For at least three of the journalists it is not the first time that they have been detained by the Huthis.

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

Only Facebook messages, emails and faxes will get through, not hard copy letters

- Calling on the Huthi armed group to release the nine journalists, unless they are to be promptly transferred to proper judicial authorities and charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- Urging them to ensure the nine journalists are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and are allowed regular access to their families and lawyers;
- Urging them to ensure the journalists receive any medical attention they require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 MARCH 2016 TO:

Deputy Minister of Human Rights

Ali Saleh Taissir

Email: a.taissir@yahoo.com

Salutation: Dear Sir

Director of the Human Rights

Department at Ansarullah Office

Abdulmalik al-Ajari

Facebook page: <http://on.fb.me/1n1y4Mn>

Salutation: Dear Sir

And copies to:

Director of the Office of the Presidency

Mahmod Abdulqader al-Jounid

Fax: +967 1 274147

Email: mahmodaljounid@gmail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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 been consolidating their hold on Sana'a and the rest of the country. They dissolved parliament on 6 February 2015 and issued a constitutional declaration mandating the creation of a transitional presidential council, which was established to act as a government for an interim period of two years. On 23 March 2015, the conflict between, on the one hand, the Huthis, supported by Yemeni army units and some security forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and, on the other, the army units loyal to President Hadi, supported by certain tribes and armed groups, intensified in the south of the country, which until then had been outside Huthi control.

A military coalition of 10 countries, led by Saudi Arabia, began a campaign of air strikes on 25 March 2015 against the Huthis in support of the forces loyal to President Hadi. The first air strikes hit Huthi targets and military installations, mainly in Sana'a and Sa'da, in the north of the country, and later Aden and elsewhere. Both sides have committed human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes. Over 2,700 civilians in Yemen have died since the conflict began, with indiscriminate attacks by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition killing many civilians. The conflict has exacerbated an already dire humanitarian situation, with over 2.5 million people displaced and 82% of the population in need of humanitarian assistance.

There has been a surge in arbitrary arrests, detentions and abductions by the Huthi armed group and allied forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh since the beginning of the Saudi Arabian-led coalition's aerial campaign. Scores of activists and people of various political backgrounds perceived as opponents by the Huthis have been arbitrarily arrested, detained and, in some cases, tortured and otherwise ill-treated. The majority of those targeted have been leaders, members or supporters of the political party al-Islah, which has been vocal in condemning the Huthis' violations since they took over Sana'a in September 2014 and are perceived as supportive of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition's air strikes. Most of these arrests have taken place in the cities of Sana'a, Ibb and Hodeidah. Muhammad Qahtan, a leading figure in the al-Islah political party, has been in the custody of the Huthi armed group since he was taken from his home in Sana'a on 4 April 2015. His family were able to visit him on 7 April but since mid-April he has been held incommunicado. Muhammad Qahtan suffers from Type-2 diabetes but was not able to take his medication with him when he was detained. The day before he was taken away, the al-Islah party had released a statement in support of the Saudi Arabia-led military coalition and the legitimacy of Yemeni President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi's authority. Huthis have also harassed and arrested journalists, human rights defenders and activists who have criticized their takeover of government institutions.

Amnesty International has interviewed dozens of former detainees and families of detainees in Sana'a, Ibb and Hodeidah who were arbitrarily arrested and held incommunicado in unknown locations during 2015. Many people were taken from their homes without warrants by Huthis and allied forces who forced their way in. Many have been held in multiple locations including unofficial detention centres such as private homes, without being given the chance to challenge the lawfulness of their detention or being told why they were being detained.

Name: Abdelkhaleq Amran, Hisham Tarmoom, Tawfiq al-Mansouri, Hareth Humid, Hasan Annab, Akram al-Walidi, Haytham al-Shihab, Hisham al-Yousefi and Essam Balgheeth.

Gender: m

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