

URGENT ACTION

NEWSPAPER EDITOR RELEASED IN YEMEN

Hisham Bashraheel, editor of a newspaper in Yemen, has been released on bail, after being detained without charge for almost three months. His two adult sons are still in custody, and have not yet been charged with any offence. Their detention may be solely due to the newspaper's coverage of protests in southern Yemen.

Hisham Bashraheel, the 66-year-old editor-in-chief of Yemeni daily newspaper *al-Ayyam*, was released on bail on 25 March. He and his son **Hani Bashraheel** were detained on 6 January. Another of his sons, **Muhammad Bashraheel**, was arrested on 5 January. Both sons also worked for *al-Ayyam*. The three had been held at the Criminal Investigation Department in the southern city of Aden. Initially they were held incommunicado, but were later given access to relatives and lawyers. Hisham Bashraheel's health is believed to have deteriorated while in detention.

Hisham Bashraheel was accused of forming an armed gang following a protest at the offices of *al-Ayyam* in Aden, in which he and his two sons took part. The protest began on 4 January, eight months after the authorities effectively banned them from printing and distributing copies of the newspaper. The security forces opened fire on the protestors on 4 January and the newspaper's security guards returned fire. One member of the security forces and one security guard were killed. Hisham Bashraheel is also wanted for questioning in connection with an incident in February 2008 when security guards he employed to protect his home in the capital Sana'a returned fire on men who were shooting at it. One of the attackers was killed and another injured. Hisham Bashraheel has not been formally charged in this case, but others are on trial for the killing. He may have been targeted in relation to both cases because of *al-Ayyam's* coverage of protests in southern Yemen.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English, or your own language:

- Welcoming the release of Hisham Bashraheel;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that Hani and Muhammad Bashraheel and any others still detained in connection with the protest at *al-Ayyam's* offices are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and are allowed prompt and regular access to lawyers of their choosing, their families and any medical treatment they may require;
- Expressing concern that they may be held solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, and noting that, if this is the case, Amnesty International would consider them prisoners of conscience and call for their immediate and unconditional release;
- Calling on the authorities, if there is evidence they have committed a recognizably criminal offence, to charge them without delay and ensure that any legal proceedings against them conform to international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 07 MAY 2010 TO:

Minister of Interior

His Excellency Mutaher Rashad al-Masri
Ministry of Interior
Sana'a, Republic of Yemen
Fax: +967 1 332 511 /
+967 1 514 532 / +967 1 331 899
Email: moi@yemen.net.ye
Salutation: Your Excellency

President

His Excellency Ali Abdullah Saleh
Office of the President of the Republic of Yemen
Sana'a, Republic of Yemen
Fax: +967 1 274 147
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Human Rights

Her Excellency Dr Houda 'Ali 'Abdullatif al-Baan
Ministry for Human Rights
Sana'a, Republic of Yemen
Fax: +967 1 444 838 /
+967 1 419 555 / +967 1 419 700
Email: mshr@y.net.ye
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. This is the second update of UA 03/10 (MDE 31/001/2010). Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE31/001/2010> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE31/002/2010>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The authorities confiscated every copy of *al-Ayyam* from street news stands and distribution points in the capital Sana'a and southern cities on 30 April 2009, taking similar action against several other newspapers in early May, when the offices of *al-Ayyam* were also then blockaded by the security forces to prevent copies of the newspaper from being distributed. Members of the security forces were then stationed outside *al-Ayyam* until 6 January 2010 when security forces raided its offices and confiscated computers. On 5 May 2009 the government announced that they would be banning all newspapers which they considered had expressed support for the secession of the south of the country in coverage of protests in the region. Despite this, *al-Ayyam* published some news on its website during 2009. On 13 May the security forces attacked *al-Ayyam's* office, killing two men, one of them a security guard, and wounding another.

The actions taken last year against *al-Ayyam*, which was established in 1958 and is one of Yemen's largest-circulation daily newspapers, and six other newspapers followed their coverage of a number of protests in the south of the country in the lead-up to 27 April 2009, the 15th anniversary of the start of the three-month civil war between the Yemeni government in Sana'a and southern separatists. A coalition of political groups known as the Southern Movement, seen by the government as calling for the independence of the southern part of the country, was said to be behind the protests.

In recent years Amnesty International has repeatedly documented its concerns about restrictions on freedom of expression in Yemen, in particular the authorities' targeting of critics of the state using the vaguely worded charge of "undermining national unity".

For more information see Amnesty International's media briefing *Yemen: Security and human rights* (Index: MDE 31/004/2010), 25 January 2010 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE31/004/2010/en>).

Further information on UA: 03/10 Index: MDE 31/008/2010 Issue Date: 26 March 2010

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