

URGENT ACTION

POLITICAL ACTIVIST DETAINED INCOMMUNICADO

A leader of a political opposition group in southern Yemen has been held in incommunicado detention since 9 November. Amnesty International fears for Hassan Ba'oom's health and is concerned that he may be held solely for the peaceful expression of his right to freedom of expression and therefore a prisoner of conscience.

Hassan Ba'oom, who is in his seventies, was arrested by security force members on 9 November while he was in a car on his way from Aden to al-Dali', both cities in southern Yemen. He has been detained incommunicado since. He is believed to be held in the Political Security prison in the capital, Sana'a. He is said to be a leader of the Southern Movement and chairman of a faction called the Supreme National Council for the Liberation of the South.

There have been unconfirmed reports that he has recently been transferred to a hospital. It is not known what the immediate reason for this move was, but Hassan Ba'oom is reported to have been suffering from hypertension, heart disease and diabetes. Amnesty International is concerned about the reported deterioration in his health.

Hassan Ba'oom was previously detained for two months in 2007 and six months in 2008 in connection with protests by retired soldiers from the south of Yemen against alleged discrimination in employment, salaries and pensions. The Southern Movement is a coalition of political groups that emerged out of those protests and is seen by the Yemeni government as calling for the independence of the southern part of the country. The Southern Movement has organized a number of protests over what it perceives to be the government's failure to address discrimination against people from the south of the country. The government's response to these protests has been heavy-handed. Dozens of demonstrators have been killed in or near demonstrations; in many cases they appear to have been shot dead unlawfully when were posing no risk to the lives of the security forces or others. Since the protests began in 2007, the security forces have arrested and detained, in many cases arbitrarily, thousands of demonstrators and bystanders, as well as leaders and activists of the Southern Movement.

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

- Calling on the authorities to provide Hassan Ba'oom with all necessary medical treatment without delay;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that Hassan Ba'oom is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and is allowed prompt and regular access to a lawyer of his choosing and his family;
- Noting that if he is held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, Amnesty International would consider him to be a prisoner of conscience and call for his immediate and unconditional release;
- Asking for details of any charges they he faces to be made public, and calling on the authorities to ensure that any legal proceedings against him conforms to international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 JANUARY 2011 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 Huda Ali Abdullatef
Alban
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

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Protests in the south of Yemen have been taking place sporadically for about three years. They began with protests by retired soldiers from the south, who have increasingly been complaining that they do not receive the same treatment in employment, salary and pensions as soldiers from the north of the country. Most of the retired soldiers are from the army of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), commonly known as South Yemen. Following the unification of the country in 1990, the armies of both the PDRY and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), commonly known as North Yemen, were merged into a single army for the new Republic of Yemen. However, after the civil war in 1994, which ended in the defeat of the South, many of the soldiers of the former PDRY were dismissed from the army. They, as well as those who remained in the current unified army, allege that they are subject to discrimination compared to soldiers originally from the army of the YAR. The Southern Movement appears to have emerged following these protests as well as being sparked by the general discrimination that the people in the south believe they face.

Amnesty International issued a report in August 2010 which highlighted the Yemeni government's increasing resort to repressive laws and illegal methods in response to the challenges it faces and to silence its critics. For further information please see *Yemen: Cracking down under pressure* (Index: MDE 31/010/2010), August 2010: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/yemen-abandons-human-rights-name-counteracting-terrorism-2010-08-24>

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