

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Yemen: human rights violations have no justification**

Amnesty International welcomes the UN Human Rights Committee examination of Yemen's implementation of the International Covenant on Civil Political Rights (ICCPR), which starts today.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that legal and institutional safeguards introduced in Yemen in recent years have been sidelined in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001 in the name of the "fight against terrorism". In the immediate aftermath of the events the country's political leadership authorised security forces, particularly the Political Security, to arrest and detain anyone suspected in connection with Afghanistan without any reference to human rights safeguards. The rule of law has been sidelined, the role of the judiciary, human rights bodies seriously undermined.

Thousands of people have since then been subjected to arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention. They include people who had travelled to Afghanistan or Pakistan, and their relatives, including women; members of Islamic groups; students of religious schools, including children as young as 12 years old; journalists, and academics. In all cases, the arrests were carried out without judicial warrant, and the detainees held at the total mercy of the arresting authority without access to lawyers, family or the judiciary to challenge the legality of their detention.

The victims include people like Dr Abdelsalam Nur al-Din, Director of the Centre for Red Sea Studies (CRSS) at Exeter University in the United Kingdom, and Nabil al-Kumaim, a Sana'a based Yemeni correspondent of the Qatari newspaper al-Rayah. Dr Abdelsalam Nur al-Din was on an official visit to Yemen to establish joint cooperation projects between the CRSS and Yemen university as well as other institutions. He was arrested on 26 October 2001 from his hotel in Sana'a by members of the Political Security. He was detained incommunicado for three days and interrogated about his visit to Yemen and about Usama Bin Laden. During his detention he was subjected to beatings and other forms of ill-treatment. He was released only after intervention by some high-ranking government officials. His arrest was carried out without a judicial warrant and he was not allowed access to a lawyer or the judiciary.

Nabil al-Kumaim was arrested on 29 April 2002, reportedly for having written an article on al-Qa'ida organization in Yemen. His arrest was officially justified in order to interrogate him about his sources of information. Amnesty International does not know if he is still in detention, but hundreds of people arrested on similar grounds are believed to be still detained without trial and denied the opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention before the judiciary.

Thousands of people are believed to have been forcibly deported to other countries. None is known to have been given the opportunity to seek asylum or challenge the deportation decision if they

faced the risk of human rights violations in the countries to which they were sent.

Human rights protection must always be at the core of all security measures taken by the state, Amnesty International said. "The Yemeni government should take immediate steps to release anyone held solely for the peaceful expression of their conscientiously held beliefs, ensure that anyone held on recognizably criminal offences is given a prompt and fair trial, and that no one should be forcibly deported without being offered the opportunity to seek asylum," the organization added.

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