

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE ARBITRARILY DETAINED JUDGE

Abdulwahab Mohammad Qatran, a Yemeni judge critical of the Huthi de facto authorities, was arbitrarily arrested by members of the Huthi security and intelligence service who broke into his house in Sana'a on 2 January 2024, threatened him and his family members, and interrogated them for long hours without the presence of a lawyer. The judge was then forcibly disappeared for three days. He has been placed in solitary confinement at the Huthi-controlled security and intelligence detention centre in Sana'a and is denied his right to a lawyer. He must be immediately and unconditionally released.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Ansarullah Spokesperson Mohamed Abdelsalam

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Dear Mohamed Abdelsalam,

Judge Abdulwahab Mohammad Qatran, a vocal critic of the Huthi de facto authorities' policies and human rights violations has been arbitrarily detained by the Huthi security and intelligence forces since 2 January 2024. The judge was arrested two days after he wrote a social media post on 31 December 2023 that was critical of the Huthis. Following his arrest, he was subjected to enforced disappearance for three days. He was then placed in solitary confinement at the security and intelligence detention centre in Sana'a and is denied his right to a lawyer.

According to one of his sons, on 2 January 2024 around 10 am, Huthi security and intelligence forces broke into their house in al Zira'a street in Sana'a without a warrant. They threatened the judge and his family, pointed their guns at his sons and handcuffed them, and then held the judge and his sons in separate military vehicles for hours. Security and intelligence forces searched the judge's house and confiscated the family's phones, laptops and private documents. They held the judge's wife and her sister and daughter in a room and then coerced the judge's wife into signing an interrogation record without reading it. The judge was then arrested around 5:30 pm while his three sons were released. According to one of his sons, when the security and intelligence forces released him from their military vehicle, he saw a car full of alcohol bottles displayed to the neighbourhood as being allegedly discovered at the judge's house to justify his arrest. Yemeni penal code criminalizes the manufacturing and drinking of alcohol.

The judge was then subjected to enforced disappearance for three days until the authorities confirmed to the family that he was held at the security and intelligence detention centre in Sana'a. One of his sons was allowed to visit him briefly on 6 January and then on 28 January. During the last visit which lasted for less than a minute, the judge told his son "I am dead". Since his arrest the judge has been denied access to a lawyer.

We urge the Huthi de facto authorities to immediately and unconditionally release judge Abdulwahab Mohammad Qatran as he is detained solely for peacefully exercising his human rights. Pending his release, the authorities must ensure he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that he has access to legal representation, regular family contact and adequate healthcare.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Judge Abdulwahab Mohammad Qatran was vocal in his opposition to the Huthi de facto authorities. He had published several posts on X (previously Twitter) criticizing Huthis' human rights violations and policies including their Red Sea maritime attacks. On 31 December 2023, he wrote on X that 30 million Yemenis did not authorize the Huthis to fight the US. According to one of his sons, he then received several threats from Huthi affiliated figures.

Following his arrest, his family submitted official complaints to the Supreme Judicial Council, the parliament and the Ministry of Human Rights calling for the release of the judge, but they have not received a response to date.

Arbitrary detention violates the Yemeni Criminal Procedures Law and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Yemen is a state party. Judges are also entitled to the rights to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. The UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary provide that: "In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, members of the judiciary are like other citizens entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly."

The Yemeni Judicial Authority Law of 1991 provides judges with additional legal protections from the High Judicial Council. According to the judge's lawyer, the public prosecutor informed them on 10 February that the judge's legal protections have been waived but only following his arrest which is in violation of article 87 of the Yemeni Judicial Authority Law which states that "a judge should not be arrested or detained until there is a permission from the Supreme Judicial Council".

All parties to the conflict, including the Huthi de facto authorities, the internationally recognized government and the Southern Transitional Council have carried out arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, harassment, torture and other ill-treatment and unfair trials.

Since 2015, Amnesty International has documented the cases of scores of journalists, human rights defenders, academics, members of the Baha'i community and others perceived as opponents or critics who were subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and unfair trials with recourse to the death penalty by the Huthi de facto authorities. All were targeted because of their work as journalists or for peacefully exercising their human rights including their rights to freedom of expression, association and belief.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic and English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 12 April 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Abdulwahab Mohammad Qatran (he/him)