

# URGENT ACTION

## ACTIVIST RELEASED, FACING MULTIPLE CHARGES

**Omani human rights activist, Saeed Jaddad, was released on bail on 22 December, after being charged with violating the Cyber law. His trial on charges of “undermining the status and prestige of the state” will begin in a court in Muscat on 25 January.**

Following his arrest on 10 December, **Saeed Jaddad** was taken before the Intelligence section of the police headquarters in Salalah, in the southern province of Dhofar, where he was interrogated for long hours about his human rights activities, his contacts with human rights organizations, and his internet activities including his criticism of official bodies. He was kept and interrogated in the same room for at least five days without being allowed to contact his family or a lawyer. On or around the fifth day of his detention his interrogators tried to force him to sign documents accusing him amongst other things of “harming the country and violating its laws” and “contacting foreign bodies”. He refused to do so. That night he was taken to the Prosecutor’s office where he was charged with “violating the Cyber law” and was informed that other cases against him had been filed in Muscat, the capital of Oman. Saeed Jaddad refused to answer the Prosecutor’s questions without a lawyer present. His detention was then extended a further seven days. He was transferred to Taqah prison (about 40km east of Salalah) where he shared a cell infested with cockroaches and other insects with at least 22 common law detainees, and slept on the floor. About four days later he was taken again to the Prosecutor’s office where he again refused to answer questions without his lawyer.

On 21 December, realising that he had no other option, Saeed Jaddad decided to answer the Prosecutor’s questions. His detention was renewed for another seven days. However in the morning of 22 December he was released on a US\$1200 bail and his son’s passport was confiscated as a guarantee.

On 18 January, Saeed Jaddad received a summons from the Public Prosecution to appear at the Criminal Court in Muscat to face trial on charges of “undermining the status and prestige of the state” after he called for political and social reform, and held meetings with members of the European Parliament in August 2013. However, he has publicly declared that he refuses to go to court. He remains under investigation in other cases and he could be facing other trials at any time.

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

- Urging the authorities to drop all charges against Saeed Jaddad, as they would make him a prisoner of conscience, if held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to repeal all legislation that criminalizes the right to freedom of expression and respect and protect this right.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 MARCH 2015 TO:**

Head of State and Prime Minister  
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa’id  
Diwan of the Royal Court  
The Palace, Muscat 113  
Sultanate of Oman  
Fax: +968 24 735 375  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

Minister of the Interior  
His Excellency Hamoud bin Faisal bin  
Said Al Busaidi  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of Interior  
PO Box 127, Ruwi 112, Muscat  
Sultanate of Oman  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**And copies to:**  
Chairman, National Human Rights  
Commission  
Mr Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Riyami  
P.O. Box 29, Postal Code: 103  
Bareq A' Shati  
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman  
Fax: +968 24 648 801

### **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. This is the first update of UA 318/14. Further information:  
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE20/004/2014/en>

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INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Saeed Jaddad, a 48-year-old businessman, has called for political and social reform in Oman via his blog, which is restricted to invited readers only, and Facebook. He was arrested after the security forces raided his home in Salalah, in the southern province of Dhofar, on 10 December at 9pm. They searched his home and confiscated his phone and computers. They did not tell his family why they were arresting him or where they were taking him. His family repeatedly sought information about his whereabouts but the authorities told them nothing.

Saeed Jaddad had been prevented from leaving Oman on 31 October. He was travelling to Istanbul when immigration officers at Salalah International Airport told him that he had been the subject of a travel ban since July 2014, and confiscated his passport.

Saeed Jaddad has faced repeated arrest. In December 2011, he took part in peaceful pro-reform demonstrations in Dhofar. He was arrested on 14 January 2013 and held for six months, including eight days in solitary confinement. He was released at the end of June 2013 but was banned from publishing articles in the national media and the authorities tried to pressure him into signing a statement renouncing pro-reform and human rights activities. He faced further harassment and intimidation the next month.

In August 2013 he faced charges of “undermining the status and prestige of the state” after he called for political and social reform, and held meetings with members of the European Parliament. He was never tried, but it is believed the authorities could use longstanding accusations against him in order to charge him in connection with his peaceful actions.

Amnesty International documented instances of prolonged arbitrary and incommunicado detention in Oman in 2013 and 2014. Cases of torture and other ill-treatment by state security officials during detention were also reported, with activists and critics of the government being subjected to abuses including beating, hooding, mock execution, sleep deprivation and prolonged solitary confinement.

Amnesty International has recorded, in recent years, unnecessary and excessive use of force by the police against peaceful demonstrators, arrests during large demonstrations, arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression, and discriminatory laws and practices.

In January 2014, Oman ratified the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Security Agreement. While it remains to be seen, its provisions are expected to undermine freedom of expression in the GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates). In August the government decreed a new citizenship law, to take effect in February 2015. It will empower the authorities to strip Omani nationals of their citizenship and associated rights if they are found to belong to a group deemed to uphold principles or beliefs that undermine Oman’s “best interests”, allowing the government to arbitrarily withdraw the nationality of its critics and expel them.

Name: Saeed Jaddad

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 318/14 Index: MDE 20/001/2015 Issue Date: 20 January 2015