

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 20/003/2005

10 May 2005

Further Information on UA 26/05 (MDE 20/002/2005, 28 January 2005) Fear of torture/prisoners of conscience

**OMAN
University**

Muhammad Bin Rashid Al-Gharbi (m), Lecturer at Sultan Qaboos

**Dr Ali Bin Hilal al-Arbi (m), Lecturer at Sultan Qaboos University,
Dr Jabir al-Sa'di (m), Lecturer at Sultan Qaboos University
Said al-Harhi (m), former judge
possibly over 100 other detainees**

Three of the men named above were sentenced to prison terms, along with 27 other men, on 2 May. Amnesty International believes that many may be prisoners of conscience, held solely for the peaceful expression of their conscientiously held beliefs.

Muhammad Bin Rashid Al-Gharbi and Dr Jabir al-Sa'di were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, and Dr Ali Bin Hilal al-Arbi to ten years, by the State Security Court in the capital, Muscat. They had reportedly been convicted of "plotting to overthrow the regime by force...by setting up a banned underground organization." The 27 others were sentenced to prison terms ranging from seven to 20 years. The presiding judge reportedly said that the men could not appeal against this decision, but could ask for a pardon from the Sultan of Oman within 30 days.

There was no further information on the fate of Said al-Harhi or the others, possibly detained with the 30 sentenced men, who are mainly academics and religious figures, held since mass arrests in January. Many of the arrests were carried out at night and most of those arrested had their computers and documents seized.

On 13 January Amnesty International wrote to the Minister of Interior seeking clarification of reports of the arrests, expressing concern that the detainees were at risk of torture as they were held incommunicado, and expressing concern that they appeared to be held solely for their peaceful political activities or expression of their views, and as such would be prisoners of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mass arrests and incommunicado detention of political opponents of the government of Oman has often led to allegations of torture and ill-treatment. Torture and ill-treatment may be used during interrogation in order to obtain information about political suspects or for use as evidence in court to obtain conviction following unfair trials

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- calling for the detainees to be released if they are held solely for the non-violent expression of their conscientiously held beliefs;
- regardless of whether they were convicted of recognizably criminal offences, expressing concern that the 30 people sentenced to prison terms have been convicted following trials which failed to meet basic international standards for fair trial, including the right to appeal, and calling for an independent and impartial judicial review of their case;

- seeking assurances that the detainees will not be tortured or ill-treated, and that they will be given prompt and regular access to their families, lawyers and any medical attention they may need.

APPEALS TO:

Sultan of Oman

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said
Diwan of the Royal Court
PO Box 875, Muscat 113
Sultanate of Oman

Fax: + 968 24 735 375

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdullah bin Zaher al-Hinai
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice
PO Box 354, Muscat 112
Sultanate of Oman

Fax: + 968 24 602 725

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

His Excellency Sa=ud bin Brahim al-Busa=idi
Minister of Interior, Ministry of Interior
PO Box 127, Ruwi 112
Sultanate of Oman

Fax: + 968 24 696 660

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Oman accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 June 2005.