

URGENT ACTION

WHERE IS MUHAMMAD AL-MAQALIH?

Yemeni journalist Muhammad al-Maqalih is now believed to be detained at a prison run by the Ministry of Defence, though the authorities have continued to refuse to give any information about him.

Muhammad al-Maqalih was abducted on 17 September, by men in civilian clothes, believed to be from the security forces. At first he was believed to be detained in the Political Security Prison in Sana'a, run by the Central Organ of Political Security. The Yemeni human rights NGO Marsad asked the Attorney General to explain where Muhammad al-Maqalih was detained, and ensure that he was either charged or released. The Attorney General wrote to the head of the Central Organ of Political Security, and within the past 10 days told Muhammad al-Maqalih's family that the Central Organ of Political Security had denied that Muhammad al-Maqalih was in their custody.

Amnesty International learnt from sources in Yemen that they believed Muhammad al-Maqalih was being detained in the al-Qal'a Prison in Sana'a and wrote to Yemen's Minister of Defence on 21 October asking where Muhammad al-Maqalih was detained, and raising concerns that he may have been subjected to enforced disappearance, and that he has been detained incommunicado since he was seized more than a month ago and could be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

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

- Calling on the authorities to reveal publicly where Muhammad al-Maqalih is detained, and to release him immediately and unconditionally unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- Urging them to ensure that Muhammad al-Maqalih is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and allowed prompt and regular access to a lawyer of his choosing, his family and any medical treatment he may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 DECEMBER 2009 TO:

President

'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh
Office of the President of the Republic
of Yemen
Sana'a
Republic of Yemen
Fax: +967 1 274147
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Defence

Major General Muhammad Nasser
Ahmed 'Ali
Ministry of Defence
Sana'a
Republic of Yemen
Fax: +9671252378
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Human Rights
Houda 'Ali 'Abdullatif al-Baan
Ministry for Human Rights
Sana'a
Republic of Yemen
Fax: +967 1 444833
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Yemen accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 246/09 (MDE 31/011/2009) see <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE31/011/2009/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In Yemen, critics of the state are often at risk of arrest, detention, abduction and beatings.

Yemen's Sa'da region, whose inhabitants are predominantly members of the country's Zaidi Shi'a Muslim minority, has experienced several periods of conflict in recent years. The security forces have clashed several times with followers of Zaidi Shi'a cleric Hussein al-Houthi, who was killed in 2004. The latest surge in violence began in mid-August, when the area was placed under a virtual state of emergency. Government forces have mounted a series of attacks, including bombing raids against villages and towns, in an apparent attempt to crush Hussein al-Houthi's supporters.

International humanitarian law expressly prohibits attacks which directly target civilians, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. The Yemeni government and the armed followers of Zaidi Shi'a cleric Hussein al-Houthi are legally bound to respect international humanitarian law and must ensure that their forces refrain from carrying out such unlawful attacks.

Amnesty International has called on the Yemeni authorities to investigate, fully and promptly, all allegations of serious violations by their forces, including a reported bombing raid on 16 September at Adi village in the Harf Sufyan area of Amran province near Sa'da, which is said to have killed about 80 civilians.

For more information see Amnesty International's press release *Yemen: Saudi Arabia must assist refugees fleeing Sa'da fighting* of 17 September 2009 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/yemen-saudi-arabia-must-assist-refugees-fleeing-sa%E2%80%99da-fighting-20090917>).

Further Information on UA: 246/09 Index: MDE 31/013/2009 Issue Date: 22 October 2009.

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