

URGENT ACTION

RE-ARRESTED ACTIVIST GOES ON HUNGER STRIKE

Omani human rights activist Saeed Jaddad is being held incommunicado after he was re-arrested at his home in Salalah on 21 January. He is on hunger strike and believed to be in poor health. Amnesty International believes that he is a prisoner of conscience and at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

At 10pm on 21 January, around 24 security personnel (consisting of police and army officers, many of whom were armed) forcibly removed **Saeed Jaddad** from his residence in Salalah, in the southern province of Dhofar. He was re-arrested only a few weeks after his previous release on 22 December. The following day his son visited the Prosecutor's office hoping to see his father but he was not allowed. He was also not given any information about his father's whereabouts, but was told that Saeed Jaddad would not be released prior to facing trial.

Saeed Jaddad faces charges of "undermining the status and prestige of the state" in relation to his meeting with members of the European Parliament in 2013 and calls for political and social reform in Oman. The authorities have told members of his family that he will be tried in Salalah on separate charges relating to Oman's Cyber Crimes Law. The exact dates of the trials are still unknown.

The Omani government previously detained Saeed Jaddad between 10 and 22 December 2014, during which he was interrogated for many hours about his human rights activities, his contact with human rights organizations, and his internet activities (including his criticism of official bodies). He is said to have shared a cell with 22 'common law detainees' in a cockroach and insect-infested cell where he had to sleep on the floor.

During the 21 January arrest, Saeed Jaddad repeated to the security officials what he had publicly stated previously; that he would go on a hunger strike if arrested and would refuse to take medicine for his heart condition. On 23 January Amnesty International received reports that he is in a worsening physical condition due to his hunger strike and refusal to take his medicine. Amnesty International considers Saeed Jaddad a prisoner of conscience, being detained and charged solely for peacefully exercising his human rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

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

- Calling on the Omani authorities to release Saeed Jaddad immediately and unconditionally and drop all charges against him since they have detained him solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Urging the Omani authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Saeed Jaddad;
- Calling on the Omani authorities to ensure that until he is released, Saeed Jaddad is protected from torture and other ill-treatment; that he has regular and frequent access to a lawyer of his choice, his family and adequate medical care.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 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 80

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 second update of UA 318/14. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE20/001/2015/en>

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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. The authorities have prevented him from travelling abroad on 31 October 2014 and informed him that they banned him from travelling in July 2014.

The Omani authorities have repeatedly arrested Saeed Jaddad. In December 2011, he took part in peaceful pro-reform demonstrations in Dhofar then was arrested on 14 January 2013, when the authorities held him 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 will be tried in connection with these charges, in Muscat, on 25 January 2015.

Before his current arrest, Saeed Jaddad was last arrested on 10 December 2014, when officials 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. Amnesty International understands that 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 this and 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 is understood to have 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. In the morning of 22 December he was released on a US\$1200 bail and his son’s passport was confiscated as a guarantee.

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 among other things, 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, arbitrary arrests during large demonstrations, arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression, and discriminatory laws and practices.

Name: Saeed Jaddad

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 318/14 Index: MDE 20/002/2015 Issue Date: 23 January 2015