

URGENT ACTION

PEACEFUL ACTIVIST RELEASED WITHOUT CHARGE

Omani poet, writer, film critic and human rights defender, Abdullah Habib was released without charge on 4 May.

Abdullah Habib, aged 52, was released without charge from detention in the intelligence offices in Muscat, the capital, on 4 May. That same evening he posted a status on his Facebook page of what had happened to him during his interrogation and detention. He stated that while there was a “roughness” to his treatment he was overall treated adequately. He also expressed regret if his previous Facebook posts had caused any harm to Omani unity and stated that he will remove the offending posts.

Abdullah Habib was summoned by the Omani Internal Security Service (ISS) on 15 April to appear for questioning before the Special Division of the Omani Police General Command in the capital, Muscat. Upon his arrival he was detained incommunicado and remained in detention without any access to his family or lawyer until his release.

The Omani authorities have not yet given a reason for Abdullah Habib’s arrest. Reports at the time of arrest suggested that the basis for his arrest could be his peaceful comments on Facebook including calls on Oman’s ruler Sultan Qaboos bin Said al-Busaidi to reveal the whereabouts of those killed in the Dhofar Rebellion of 1960s and 1970s.

Oman imposes arbitrary restrictions on the right to freedom of expression and in recent years many peaceful activists, government critics and others have been arrested and detained, often on public order charges or under vaguely worded penal code provisions that criminalize insulting the Sultan. Those detained are often held for several days before being released. Abdullah Habib’s case is an example of the pattern of intimidation by Omani authorities, including the ISS, of people who are simply exercising their right to freedom of expression.

No further action is requested from the UA Network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals

This is the first update of UA 92/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE20/3885/2016/en/>

Name: Abdullah Habib

Gender m/f: m

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