

## **Yemen: Stop families suffering in the name of security**

A telephone call told the family of 18-year-old Najib al-Hijri that he was detained by political security forces in the city of Sana'a, Yemen. Yet, when they tried to visit him, they were told by officials that he was not there. Family members frantically tried to make further inquiries, in the course of which Najib's brother was himself interrogated.

Although Najib was eventually found, he still has no access to lawyers, and has no idea even of when his case will be heard. The impact on his family is immense. His six brothers and sisters are suffering financially, as they try to make up for the loss of income. Constant worrying about Najib is taking its toll on the health of his elderly parents. No evidence has ever been produced that he may even be a threat to his country's security.

This case is not an isolated one. In the wake of the September 11 attacks in the USA, security forces across the Gulf region have been responsible for an upsurge in arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention and detention without trial. In many cases, these security forces seem to have taken their cue from similar abuses carried out by the US government, in places such as Guantánamo Bay.

[\(More on Guantánamo Bay\)](#)

Families are enduring emotional turmoil, financial hardship and social stigmatization for their association with crimes for which their relatives have not been charged, let alone convicted. The result has been the suffering of not only the detainees but also their families, who must live with the uncertainty of the fate of their detained relatives.

### **Call to action**

Governments across the Gulf region must end the legal limbo of people detained under security legislation, and grant immediate and full access to lawyers, family, doctors, and human rights organisations.

You can help bring justice to the family of Najib al-Hijri by writing to the government of Yemen.

### **Sample Letter**

Your Excellency,

Yemen's continued imprisonment of people such as Najib al-Hijri under security measures introduced since 11 September 2001 is threatening to undermine its commitment to advancing human rights.

I urge you to set to honour Yemen's international human rights obligations by giving all your detainees prompt and fair trials and the opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention.

All detainees must also be granted full and immediate access to lawyers, doctors, and their families, as well as immediate access to the International Committee of the Red Cross, Amnesty International and other human rights organizations.

I also urge you to use your influence to bring to an end the practices of arbitrary and illegal detention of thousands of people across the Gulf region, and thus help to lift the unbearable burden on their families, especially women and children.

Finally I call on you to ensure strict compliance with human rights standards with regard to detainees' rights, and in any security cooperation between states including all security training programs.

Yours sincerely,

### Target contact details

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Salutation: Your Excellency

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### Video

The mother of Abdel Aziz al-Sawaidi, who is detained in Guantánamo Bay, talks to an AI delegate about the suffering of his family.