

UA 29/07 **Fear of torture and ill-treatment/Incommunicado detention**YEMEN **Qursan Ahsan Qursan (m), farmer**
‘Abdullah Mohamed Saliha (m)
‘Ali ‘Abdulla Tahoos (m)
Ibrahim al-Huthi (m)
At least 50 others

The four men named above are among at least 50 people detained following clashes between security forces members of the Shi'a Zaidi community in Sa'da in northern of Yemen, at the end of January. The detainees are reportedly held incommunicado in undisclosed locations. Amnesty International is concerned that they are at risk of torture and ill-treatment and that many of them may be prisoners of conscience, held solely for expressing their conscientiously-held beliefs.

Qursan Ahsan Qursan, a farmer, was arrested by members of the armed forces in the Sala area of Sa'da on 29 January, while celebrating his daughter's wedding. Two other men, ‘Abdullah Mohamed Saliha and ‘Ali ‘Abdulla Tahoos, were also arrested by members of the armed forces on 29 January. All three are reported to be held incommunicado in undisclosed locations. On 1 February, Ibrahim al-Huthi was arrested by security forces at the airport in the capital Sana'a, when he sought to travel to obtain medical treatment abroad. He is reported to be held incommunicado at Political Security Prison in Sana'a. Ibrahim al-Huthi is the brother of Hussain Badr al-Din al-Huthi, Shi'a Zaidi cleric and former member of the Yemeni Parliament, who was killed in September 2004 during clashes with government forces. Hussain Badr al-Din al-Huthi was an outspoken critic of the US invasion of Iraq.

The latest violence is reported to have claimed the lives of dozens of people, including members of the security forces. According to press reports, a number of civilians may have been killed during a bombardment by the military. Amnesty International is concerned if these reports are accurate, those killed may have been victims of excessive use of force, in violation of Yemen's obligations under international law.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Long-standing tensions between the Shi'a Zaidi community and the Yemeni government were heightened by protests by the Shi'a Zaidi community during the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. During and after the US-led invasion, members of the Zaidi community carried on the protests after Friday prayers every week outside mosques, particularly the Grand Mosque in Sana'a, during which they shouted anti-US and anti-Israeli slogans. The protests were invariably followed by arrests and detentions. In June 2004 the government called on Hussain Badr al-Din al-Huthi, one of those leading the criticism of the US-led invasion, to hand himself over to the authorities. When he refused, tension between the two sides escalated into armed clashes.

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

- seeking urgent assurances that Qursan Ahsan Qursan, ‘Abdullah Mohamed Saliha, ‘Ali ‘Abdulla Tahoos, Ibrahim al-Huthi and others detained in connection with the clashes in Sa'da province, are not being tortured or ill-treated, and that all are given access to lawyers, their families and any medical treatment they may need;
- calling for them to be released immediately and unconditionally if they are held solely for the peaceful expression of their conscientiously-held beliefs;
- if the detainees have been charged with recognizably criminal offences, ask for clarification of these together with details of any trial proceedings against them;
- seeking assurances that security forces will adhere strictly to international standards, particularly the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials. Basic Principle 9 states: "In any event, intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life." Principle 8 states: "exceptional circumstances such as internal political instability or any other public emergency may not be invoked to justify any departure from these basic principles."

APPEALS TO:President

His Excellency General ‘Ali ‘Abdullah Saleh
President of the Republic of Yemen
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Republic of Yemen

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 March 2007.*****