

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: MDE 31/02/94
Distr: UA/SC

UA 279/94 Torture / Fear of torture / Prisoners of conscience 19 July 1994

YEMEN Dr. Muhammad al-Mikhlaifi, researcher at the Yemeni Centre for Research and Studies

Nu'man Qa'id Sayf, journalist at al-Tajamu' newspaper

'Izzadin Sa'eed Ahmad, journalist, Vice-President of the Writers' Union in Taiz

'Abdullah Sa'd, journalist at al-Shura newspaper

'Abdul-Rahman Sayf Ismail, journalist, local government employee

Over 15 people, including those named above, were arrested between 17 and 18 July 1994 following a seminar organized by The Yemen Times on "*The Future Political Perspectives of Yemen*". All were arrested by *al-Amn al-Siyassi* (political security) and are currently being held at the *al-Amn al-Siyassi* detention centre in the district of al-Safia, in Sana'a. All are being held incommunicado and in solitary confinement. There have already been reports of torture and Amnesty International fears that the detainees may be further tortured or ill-treated. The organization considers them to be prisoners of conscience, held solely for their conscientiously held beliefs.

At least four of those held were released 24 hours later, including Dr. 'Abdul-'Aziz al-Saqaf, editor-in-chief and publisher of The Yemen Times and Ahmad al-Sufi, journalist. Both were subjected to beatings and Ahmad al-Sufi was chained with leg irons.

Amnesty International delegates currently in Yemen to conduct research into human rights violations and to hold discussions with government authorities, have urged the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those held in connection with this seminar, and have expressed grave concern that those held are being tortured or ill-treated.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Following the outbreak of war in Yemen on 4 May 1994 between the governmental forces and forces loyal to the Yemeni Socialist Party in the Southern provinces of Yemen, thousands of suspected political opponents were arrested. The majority were released following a general amnesty decree by the Presidential Council, however, hundreds of suspected political opponents remain in detention throughout the Republic of Yemen. Amnesty International is gravely concerned that some of them may be subjected to torture or at risk of "disappearance".

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the arrests of those attending the seminar, who Amnesty International believes are prisoners of conscience, detained solely on account of their conscientiously held beliefs;
- expressing concern about the reports of torture, and seeking assurances that those still held are being treated in accordance with international human rights standards;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained in connection with the seminar.

APPEALS TO

His Excellency

General 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh
Chairman of the Presidential Council
Presidential Council
Sana'a
Republic of Yemen

Telegrams: President 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh, Sana'a, YEMEN

Faxes: + 967 1 262017

Telexes: 2422 RIASAH YE

Salutation: Your Excellency

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 30 August 1994.