

URGENT ACTION

FAMILY VISITS DENIED FOR DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Yemeni journalists arbitrarily detained by Huthi forces have been interrogated in the month of May and since then denied regular access to their families. They are currently detained in the capital Sana'a and are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

According to information provided to Amnesty International, Yemeni journalists **Abdelkhaleq Amran, Hisham Tarmoom, Tawfiq al-Mansouri, Hareth Hamid, Hasan Annab, Akram al-Walidi, Haytham al-Shihab, Hisham al-Yousefi and Essam Balgheeth** were interrogated at the Political Security Office (PSO) in Sana'a. Since then, the nine journalists have been arbitrarily denied regular access to their families, placing them at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. **Salah al-Qaedi**, another journalist who has been arbitrarily detained since August 2015, has also been denied regular visits.

All 10 journalists have been suffering from a range of medical issues, including stomach and colon pain, hearing problems, haemorrhoids and headaches due to eyesight issues for which they have not received adequate medical attention.

In November 2016, detainees held in adjacent cells in PSO heard Abdelkhaleq Amran screaming as he was being tortured, according to his family. From May to September 2016, Abdelkhaleq Amran was held in solitary confinement, and during that period, all 10 journalists were held incommunicado. In September 2016, the families of all 10 journalists were allowed to visit their relatives for the first time since they were forcibly disappeared in May 2016. This was following their transfer from al-Habra pre-trial detention facility in Sana'a to PSO, without the knowledge of their families.

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

- Urging the de facto Huthi authorities to ensure that the 10 journalists are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and given, without delay, regular access to their families, lawyers and any medical treatment they may require;
- Urging them to release the 10 journalists immediately, unless they are promptly transferred to proper judicial authorities and charged with a recognizable criminal offence, in line with international law and standards;
- Calling upon them to open an effective, independent and impartial investigation into the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 JULY 2017 TO:

Ansarullah Representative at Peace

Talks

Mohamed Abdelsalam

Email: mdabdalsalam@gmail.com

Salutation: Dear Sir

Director of the Human Rights

Department at Ansarullah Office

Abdulmalik al-Ajari

Facebook page: <http://on.fb.me/1n1y4Mn>

Salutation: Dear Sir

And copies to:

Director of the Office of the Presidency

Mahmod Abdulqader al-Jounid

Fax: +967 1 274147

Email: mahmodaljounid@gmail.com

Salutation: Dear Sir

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Dr. Yassin Saeed Noman Ahmed, 57 Cromwell Rd, London SW7 2ED, 020 7584 6607, Fax 020 7589 3350, <https://www.yemenembassy.co.uk/contact-us.html>

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 27/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde31/5331/2016/en/>

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

FAMILY VISITS DENIED FOR DETAINED JOURNALISTS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 10 journalists work for a variety of news outlets, some of which oppose the Huthi armed group, while others are aligned to the al-Islah opposition political party.

On 9 June 2015, at 4am, Abdelkhaleq Amran, Hisham Tarmoom, Tawfiq al-Mansouri, Hareth Humid, Hasan Annab, Akram al-Walidi, Haytham al-Shihab, Hisham al-Yousefi and Essam Balgheeth were working in a room hired out in Qasr al-Ahlam Hotel on al-Sitteen Street, Sana'a, when several armed men entered the room. The armed men were dressed in a mixture of civilian and military clothing, and some had slogans on their weapons that are associated with the Huthi armed group and its political wing, Ansarullah. The journalists were initially divided and taken to two separate locations in Sana'a – al-Ahmar and al-Hasaba police stations – where some were allowed a brief phone call to their family. After two days, some of the men were transferred to the counter-terrorism department of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), where they were held for a month. From mid-July to mid-September 2015 all nine journalists were held incommunicado in unknown locations; the families only learnt that they had been transferred to al-Thawra pre-trial detention facility in Sana'a from released prisoners who had been held with them. Al-Thawra pre-trial detention facility is under the jurisdiction of the Huthi-aligned Ministry of Interior.

In the late afternoon of 28 August 2015, Salah al-Qaedi was arrested by members of Huthi forces at his home in Sana'a. Salah al-Qaedi's family told Amnesty International that he has been tortured during his detention. There are no formal charges against him but his family suspect that he is being detained because he worked for the al-Islah aligned Suhayl Channel. Since the Huthi forces took over Sana'a in September 2014, the channel has been vocal in condemning the Huthis' violations and are perceived as supportive of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition's air strikes. In September 2014, the channel was raided by the Huthi forces and eventually shut down in March 2015.

On 16 March 2016, nine of the journalists, excluding Salah al-Qaedi, were moved from al-Thawra pre-trial detention facility in Sana'a, where they had been detained since mid-September 2015, to al-Habra. Salah al-Qaedi had been detained in al-Habra since mid-October 2015. On 23 May 2016, the families of all 10 detained journalists went to visit their relatives in al-Habra. On arrival, prison guards told the families that the journalists were no longer in there but refused to reveal their whereabouts. The 10 journalists were forcibly disappeared on this day after being moved from al-Habra pre-trial detention facility in Sana'a to PSO, without the knowledge of their families. On 9 May, the journalists started a hunger strike in protest of their continuing detention without charge or trial. Relatives of Abdelkhaleq Amran and Hareth Hamid said that the two men were seriously ill following their hunger strike but the prison authorities refused to transfer them to a hospital as per their families' demand.

There has been a surge in arbitrary arrests, detentions and enforced disappearances by the Huthi armed group and allied forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh since the beginning of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition's aerial campaign in March 2015. Hundreds of activists, human rights defenders and people of various political backgrounds perceived as opponents by the Huthis have been arbitrarily arrested, detained and, in some cases, tortured and otherwise ill-treated. Some have been forcibly disappeared. The majority of those targeted have been leaders, members or supporters of the political party al-Islah. Most of these arrests have taken place in the cities of Sana'a, Ibb, Hodeidah and Ta'iz.

Further information on UA: 27/16 Index: MDE 31/6383/2017 Issue Date: 31 May 2017