

# URGENT ACTION

## RELEASE OMANI ARTIST AND PEACEFUL ACTIVIST

**Omani poet, writer, film critic and human rights defender, Abdullah Habib has been held in detention in Muscat's intelligence offices since 15 April. He has been denied any access to his family or lawyer. He is a prisoner of conscience. Amnesty International calls for his immediate and unconditional release.**

**Abdullah Habib**, aged 52, was summoned by the Omani Internal Security Service (ISS) at approximately 5pm 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 he has remained in detention since then without any access to his family or lawyer.

The Omani authorities have not yet given a reason for Abdullah Habib's arrest. Reports suggest that the basis for his arrest could be his peaceful comments on Facebook in which he showed support to Hafiz Mohammad Shaker, the 17-year-old son of human rights defender Habiba Al Hanaei, and called 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.

Abdullah Habib took part in demonstrations in Oman in 2011, echoing other regional protests that called for better living standards in Oman. He took part in the peaceful protest in People's Square in front of Oman's parliament, the Shura Council, in Muscat, on 14 May 2011.

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.

### **Please write immediately in Arabic or your own language:**

- Calling on the Omani authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Abdullah Habib if his arrest is in connection with views he has expressed which were peaceful and which did not incite hatred or violence;
- Ensure that while he is detained, he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and that he has regular access to a lawyer of his choice and his family;
- Reminding the Omani authorities that, in line with the UN's 1998 Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the government must provide protection to human rights defenders, including against any violence, threats, retaliation or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of the legitimate exercise of their rights.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 JUNE 2016 TO:**

#### Minister of Justice

Sheikh Abdul Malik al-Khalili  
Ministry of Justice  
PO Box 354  
RUWI PC 112  
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman  
E-mail: [info@moj.gov.om](mailto:info@moj.gov.om)  
Twitter: @moj\_gov  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### Minister of Interior

His Excellency Hamoud bin Faisal bin  
Said Al Busaidi  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of Interior  
PO Box 127, Ruwi 112  
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### **And copies to:**

Chairman, Oman Human Rights  
Commission  
Dr 'Isa Bin Sa'id Sulayman al-Kiyumii  
Fill in form at:  
[http://www.nhrc.om/website\\_complaintsa](http://www.nhrc.om/website_complaintsa)  
[dd.php?language=en](http://www.nhrc.om/website_complaintsa)  
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman  
Fax: +968 24 2189 06

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY ABDULAZIZ ABDULLAH ZAHIR AL HINAI Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman, 167 Queens Gate Sw7 5HE, 020 7225 0001, Fax 020 7589 2505

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to information on the Facebook page entitled Release Abdullah Habib Now, set up to campaign for his release (see: <https://www.facebook.com/Release-Abdullah-Habib-Now-861310593978520/>), Abdullah Habib holds a BA (1992) in Philosophy and Film from San Diego State University, an MA in Film and Cultural Studies from University of Texas (1999), as well as a PhD (2005) in Critical Film Studies from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), California. The Facebook page states that between 2000 and 2002, he taught courses in college on "Orientalism, Post-Colonialism and Cinema", "Third World Cinema", and "Cinema and Social Change", and "Film Genres" at UCLA and at Otago University in New Zealand. It also states that he has directed several short films including "Dream", "The Poet", "The Vision", "The Statue", and "This is Not a Pipe", for which he won the Abu Dhabi Cultural Association Award in 1992.

Abdullah has, according to the Facebook page calling for his release, published nine books of poetry and short story collections, and a novel titled "Seaweed". He has also translated several writings and research on film such as "Notes on Cinematography" by Robert Bresson. Habib has written numerous studies on film, which he published in his book "Cinematic Questioning" and has served as juror for a number of Arab film festivals and he is a permanent member of the Media Committee for the Dubai Film Festival.

In March 2016, the government of Oman rejected recommendations made at United Nations human rights process called the Universal Periodic Review, to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including by investigating cases of excessive use of force against demonstrators and supporting civil society organizations. Oman both accepted and rejected recommendations to review current legislation that fails to protect the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association. Amnesty International has documented instances of prolonged arbitrary and incommunicado detention in Oman between 2013 and 2015. Cases of torture and other ill-treatment by state security officials during detention were also reported. Activists and critics of the government have reported being subjected to beatings, hooding, mock executions, sleep deprivation, prolonged solitary confinement and other forms of torture and other ill-treatment. Amnesty International has also recorded, in recent years, unnecessary and excessive use of force by the police against peaceful demonstrators, arbitrary arrests during large demonstrations, arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression, and discriminatory laws and practices. On 14 May 2011, activists Muhammad al-Habssi, Nabhan al-Hanashi, Ibrahim Sa'id al-Hajri and lawyer Basma al-Kiyumi, were arrested and held during a peaceful protest in Muscat.

Name: Abdullah Habib

Gender m/f: m

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