

# URGENT ACTION

## OMAN PROTESTORS RELEASED; SOME STILL HELD

**All those detained in Oman in relation to recent protests, have been released without charge, except for at least nine men. The nine men continue to be held without charge and at least one is held incommunicado, increasing the risk of torture or other ill-treatment. They may be held solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.**

Security forces in Oman have arrested dozens of people in relation to protests which began in January. A number of protesters, who had been camping out at the Globe Roundabout in Sohar, in the north of Oman, were arrested on 29 March. A number of others were arrested at their homes. Following a protest on 1 April, many more were arrested. All are now believed to have been released without charge except for at least nine men who are still detained without charge. Most of these are believed to be held at the Central Prison in Samail, west of the capital, Muscat.

All nine, among them **Ali al-Badi** and **Hilal al-Alawi**, are believed to have been arrested on 29 March and to have been the organizers of the protests in Sohar. **Hilal al-Alawi**, aged 27, was arrested at his parent's house at around 3am. He has been held in solitary confinement since his arrest. His family were able to see him once when he was held in the Central Prison in Samail, but since his transfer to a prison in Muscat a week ago they have been prevented from seeing him. **Ali al-Badi's** family have not been able to see him since his arrest on 29 March. It is not known if the other men have been denied access to their families and lawyers.

**Ahmed al-Shezawi** and his uncle **Dr Abdul Gufar al-Shezawi**, who had taken part in the protests in Sohar, were released without charge on 10 April after they signed a pledge not to commit acts of destruction to public property. Ahmed al-Shezawi was arrested at around 3am on 29 March at his flat in Muscat. He was detained at an unknown location where he is alleged to have been subjected to loud music day and night while in solitary confinement, except for when he was being interrogated. He is reported to have been questioned about his links with foreign organizations such as the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC).

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Welcome the release without charge of those arrested following the protests in Sohar and Muscat;
- Urge the authorities to ensure that the at least nine men who remain detained are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and given regular access to their families, lawyers and any medical attention they may require;
- Call for their immediate and unconditional release if they are prisoners of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly; otherwise they should be released unless they are promptly charged with recognizable criminal offences and tried in conformity with international fair trial standards;
- Ask for details of any charges brought against them and clarification of their current legal status and whereabouts in detention.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 JUNE 2011 TO:

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id  
Head of State, Prime Minister, Foreign  
Affairs, Defence and Finance Minister  
Diwan of the Royal Court  
The Palace, Muscat 113  
Sultanate of Oman  
Fax: +968 24 735 375  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

His Excellency Sayid 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:

Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Riyami  
Chairman  
National Human Rights Commission  
P.O.Box 29, Postal Code: 103  
Bareq A' Shati, Muscat, Sultanate of  
Oman  
Fax: +968 24648801  
Email: [enquiry@nhrc.om](mailto:enquiry@nhrc.om)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 96/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE20/001/2011/en>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Protesters set up camp at the Globe Roundabout in Sohar, in the north of Oman from 27 February, when two people were reportedly killed at a protest by 2,000 people when police fired rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse them. The protestors were calling for more jobs, an end to corruption and for the sacking of certain government officials Abdullah al-Ghamalasi, a student, was killed and another man was reported to have died during surgery for injuries he sustained at the protest. Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at demonstrators, some of whom threw stones at the police. At least a dozen people were injured. The following day, around 40 people are reported to have been arrested but then released the same day by orders of Oman's ruler, Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id. For more information, see Amnesty International's press release, *Oman must rein in security forces to prevent further deaths*, 28 February 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/oman-must-rein-security-forces-prevent-further-deaths-2011-02-28>.

On 27 February, Sultan Qaboos ordered the creation of 50,000 jobs and that 150 Omani riyals a month (approximately US\$390) be paid in benefits for the unemployed, in response to protestors' demands. On 7 March, Sultan Qaboos made a wide-ranging reshuffle and restructuring of the cabinet, sacking a number of government ministers.

However, protests have continued intermittently with protestors call for further dismissals of government ministers, including the Minister of Information, and for certain current and former ministers to be held to account for alleged offences, including the former Minister of the Royal Office. Protestors have also been calling for greater press freedom and the implementation of reforms that Sultan Qaboos ordered in February and March.

Protestors refused to move from the Globe Roundabout in Sohar until their demands were met but at around 3am on 29 March security forces arrested a number of protestors there and removed blockades that had been erected and forced those present to leave. Others who had attended the protests were arrested at their homes. On 1 April hundreds of protestors tried to re-take control of the Globe Roundabout area but were repulsed by the police; one man is reported to have died afterwards from injuries he sustained. More arrests then followed.

On 20 April, Sultan Qaboos was reported by the Oman News Agency to have issued a royal pardon to 234 people for alleged "crimes of crowding in the streets of the wilayats of Sohar, Ibri, Dhank and Yanqul". Others accused of offences such as arson, hindering the work of the public authorities by force, blocking roads and the traffic, insulting and assaulting public employees, were ordered to be brought to court in accordance with the law. It is not clear who was included in the pardon or when they were released.

Oman continues to maintain strict restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. In recent years, several bloggers and journalists have been targeted, and some have been detained, for criticizing the government.

Further information on UA: 96/11 Index: MDE 20/002/2011 Issue Date: 21 April 2011

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