

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Libya: Amnesty International concerned by death of journalist

Amnesty International has called on the Libyan government to provide details of the official inquiry that it says is being held into the murder of Dhaif al-Ghazzal, whose mutilated body was found on 2 June 2005 in a suburb of Benghazi. His hands were reportedly tied behind his back, his fingers had been cut off, he had bruises and stab wounds to the body, and he had been shot in the head.

Amnesty International expressed its concerns at reports that Dhaif al-Ghazzal was arrested in Benghazi on 21 May by two men who identified themselves as members of Libya's Internal Security Agency. Before his arrest he had apparently received anonymous death threats which he believed were a result of his writings about corruption and the need for political reform. The Libyan authorities, however, have denied that he was detained by security officials and say that there was no official involvement in his death. They have announced that several people have been held for questioning about Dhaif al-Ghazzal's death but as yet Amnesty International does not know of any charges being brought against them.

Dhaif al-Ghazzal formerly was a journalist working for *al-Zahf al-akhdar* (The Green March), official newspaper of the Revolutionary Committees, for four years. He resigned his post on 26 March 2005 reportedly because of his concern about corruption. Since then, he continued to write about and denounce corruption and promote the cause of political reform in writings he contributed to a news website called Libya Jeel (libyajeel.com). He is reported to have received a number of anonymous death threats as a result of these writings.

Amnesty International welcomes the authorities' decision to open an investigation into the killing of Dhaif al-Ghazzal and looks forward to receiving further information on the outcome of this investigation in the near future. The organization sought assurances from the Libyan authorities that the investigation into the killing of Dhaif al-Ghazzal is conducted by an independent and impartial body and for its results to be made public. It also called for those responsible for the killing to be brought to justice irrespective of whether or not they were state officials.