

PUBLIC

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UA 274/07 Incommunicado detention/ Fear of torture or ill-treatment/ health concern

YEMEN Muhammad Ahmed Abdullah al-Sha'wi (m)

Muhammad Ahmed 'Abdullah al-Sha'wi is being detained incommunicado and is at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment. He may not have access to the medical attention he needs. He may be a prisoner of conscience, detained as a result of newspaper articles he has written, which have criticized the authorities.

Muhammad Ahmed Abdullah al-Sha'wi was reportedly arrested at the airport in the capital, Sana'a, by officers from the National Security forces on 12 October. He had just returned from receiving medical treatment in Egypt, and still needs regular medical checkups. His family have not been informed of his current whereabouts, in violation of national and international law, though reports suggest he is held by the National Security forces in Sana'a.

Muhammad Ahmed Abdullah al-Sha'wi's family have written to President 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh and the Minister of Human Rights, seeking clarification of his whereabouts and calling for his release. The Minister of Human Rights was said to have asked the Minister of Interior to investigate the family's complaint, but there has been no further news of the whereabouts of Muhammad Ahmed Abdullah al-Sha'wi, and he remains at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Muhammad Ahmed Abdullah al-Sha'wi is reported to have written articles for the weekly newspaper *Attariq*, based in the city of Aden, in which he has criticized the authorities in Yemen.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has repeatedly raised its concerns regarding arrests and detentions by the security forces in Yemen, which are carried out with total disregard for the rule of law and for Yemen's international human rights obligations. Arrests of critics of the state and suspected political opponents are often carried out without the judicial supervision required by law and those detained are often subjected to lengthy incommunicado detention and interrogations, during which some detainees are subjected to torture or ill-treatment. Detainees are often denied access to lawyers, as well as the opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention before a court of law. They are often detained for weeks, months or years then released without charge or trial. Trials of political suspects are rare and fall far short of international standards for fair trial.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic or English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Muhammad Ahmed 'Abdullah al-Sha'wi, who is being held incommunicado;
- calling on the authorities to reveal his whereabouts, and to give him immediate access to his lawyer, relatives and any medical attention he may require;
- calling for Muhammad Ahmed 'Abdullah al-Sha'wi 's immediate and unconditional release if he is held solely for reasons connected with his peaceful criticism of government policies;
- seeking urgent assurances that Muhammad Ahmed 'Abdullah al-Sha'wi is not being tortured or ill-treated in detention.

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency General 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh

President of the Republic of Yemen

Sana'a

Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 127 4147

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

His Excellency Dr Rashid Muhammad al-Alimi

Ministry of Interior

Sana'a

Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 1 332 511

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Human Rights

Her Excellency Houda 'Ali 'Abdullatif al- Baan

Ministry for Human Rights

Sana'a

Republic of Yemen

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Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Dr Abu Bakr 'Abdullah al-Qurbi

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Sana'a

Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 1 276 618

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 6 December 2007.