

May 2020



Mwatana for Human Rights

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**Yemen: Over 150 NGOs appeal for death sentences of four journalists to be overturned**

Organisations which support human rights, press freedom and journalists are calling on United Nations mechanisms and member states to help save the lives of four Yemeni journalists who [were sentenced to death](#) in April 2020 in the capital Sana'a on charges of "spying" and "spreading false news." Of the six other journalists in the same case whom the judge ordered to be freed, after five years in detention, only one has been released so far. The *de facto* authorities in Sana'a, the Houthis, must immediately overturn the death sentences and free the other nine journalists who have been convicted in violation of their right to freedom of expression.

We recently celebrated World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2020. Journalism, especially independent and critical journalism, is vital to promote transparency accountability, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Journalists are in no way actors in the conflict in Yemen and cannot be targeted under any circumstances.

The four journalists, **Abdulkhaleq Ahmed Amran, Akram Saleh Al-Walidi, Al-Hareth Saleh Hamid** and **Tawfiq Mohammed Al-Mansouri** were convicted on 11 April 2020 by the Specialised Criminal Court in Sana'a, which is controlled by the Houthis. Their lawyer **Abdelmajeed Sabra**, who was denied access to the verdict hearing, [began the appeals process on 22 April 2020](#).

The judge sentenced the other six journalists, **Hisham Ahmed Tarmoom, Hisham Abdulmalik Al-Yousefi, Haitham Abdulrahman Al-Shihab, Essam Amin Balgheeth, Hassan Abdullah Annab** and **Salah Muhammad Al-Qaedi**, to time already served in prison, or approximately five years, and also placed them under police supervision for a period of another three years. In addition, the electronic devices and materials that were in their possession when they were arrested remain confiscated.

The Public Prosecution had demanded that the maximum penalties be directed against them according to Articles 16, 21, 126 second, and 136 of the Penal Code (Law No. 12 of 1994 on crimes and penalties).

The journalists were charged with [spreading false news "in support of the crimes of Saudi aggression and its allies against the Republic of Yemen."](#) The journalists were also accused of "harming the public interest by setting up several websites and pages on the Internet and social networks and running them in secret in several hotels in the capital, Sanaa." The Saudi-led coalition has been fighting a war against the Houthis in Yemen since 2015.

On 9 June 2015, a group of Houthi forces [arrested nine of the journalists](#) while they were using the Internet at the Qasr Al-Ahlam hotel in Sana'a. Salah Mohammad Al-Qaedi was later detained at his home in Sana'a by Houthi forces on 28 August 2015. They were arbitrarily detained, [held in solitary confinement at length, tortured and mistreated](#) while in captivity, and were not formally charged until more than three years later. In December 2018, fabricated charges were issued against them related to their peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression in a show trial that violated international fair trial and due process standards.

Meanwhile, despite the court's decision to release the six journalists, the authorities continue to delay their release. Until the date of this appeal, only journalist Salah Mohammad Al-Qaedi has been released (on 23 April 2020).

The undersigned organisations call on all the parties to the conflict to uphold the right to freedom of expression and cease their efforts to muzzle journalists and media organisations.

We, the undersigned, call on the United Nations, specifically the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, and UN Members states, such as the United Kingdom and Canada, who co-chair the Media Freedom Coalition of 35 states, to request the *de facto* authorities in Sana'a, the Houthis, to:

- Overturn the sentences against the ten journalists, particularly the death sentences imposed on journalists Abdulkhaleq Ahmed Amran, Akram Saleh Al-Walidi, Al-Hareth Saleh Hamid and Tawfiq Mohammed Al-Mansouri, and release them immediately;
- Immediately free journalists Hisham Ahmed Tarmoom, Hisham Abdulmalik Al-Yousefi, Haitham Abdulrahman Al-Shihab, Essam Amin Balgheeth, and Hassan Abdullah Annab, following the court's order to release them on 11 April 2020, and ensure they are not subjected to further judicial measures to restrict their work;
- Free all detained and disappeared Yemeni journalists, and drop all charges against them;
- Make every effort to ensure the safety and physical integrity of journalists - in accordance with customary international humanitarian law; and
- Ensure that journalists are able to carry out their work without fear of arrest or other forms of reprisals and restrictions that violate their right to freedom of expression.

Signed,

1. Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran
2. Abductees' Mothers Association
3. ACAT-Belgique /Belgium/ Belgie
4. ACAT-Côte d'Ivoire
5. ACAT-España/ Catalunya

6. ACAT-Germany (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture)
7. ACAT-Italia
8. ACAT-Switzerland
9. ACAT-USA
10. Access Center For Human Rights (ACHR)
11. Access Now
12. Ahmed Tlili's Foundation for Democratic Culture
13. Al-Aalem Al-Jadeed
14. Al-Haq - Palestine
15. Al-Mustaqbal Association
16. Al-Wed Development Foundation
17. Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADDH)
18. ALQST for Human Rights
19. Amarchi Center for Media Development
20. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
21. Amman Center for Human Rights Studies
22. Arab Coalition against the Death Penalty
23. Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR), Syria
24. Arab Women Organisation of Jordan (AWO)
25. Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)
26. ARTICLE 19
27. Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc
28. Association for Citizenship, Development, Cultures and Migrations of the Two Banks (CDCMIR)
29. Association mauritanienne des droits de l'Homme (AMDH)
30. Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development
31. Association of Tunisian Women Voters
32. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
33. Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights
34. Center for Civil Liberties, Ukraine
35. Center for Constitutional Rights
36. Center for Democracy and Civil Rights in Syria
37. CIVICUS
38. Committee to Protect Journalists
39. Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide
40. Dameer Association for Rights and Freedoms
41. Death Penalty Focus, USA
42. Democratic Transition and Human Rights Support Center (DAAM)
43. El-Nadim Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence
44. Electronic Organization for Humanitarian Media
45. English PEN
46. Ethical Possibility Enhancement (EPE) Movement
47. FIDH

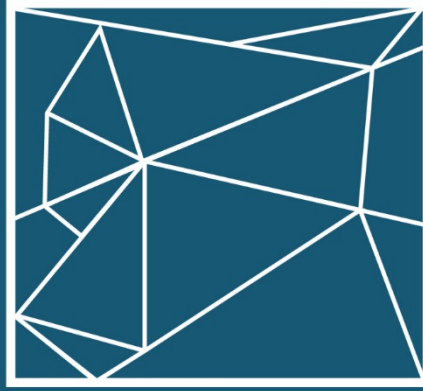
48. For Your Sake Foundation
49. Free Press Unlimited
50. Free Sight Association
51. Freedom Forum
52. Freedom Now, Morocco
53. Geneva Council for Rights and Liberties
54. German Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (GCADP)
55. Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)
56. Global Voices Advox
57. Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
58. Hands Off
59. Human Rights Sentinels
60. HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
61. IFEX
62. Impunity Watch
63. Initiative Mawjoudin pour l'égalité
64. Inmates' Voices / Voix de détenus - Switzerland
65. Innovation for Change Middle East and North Africa
66. International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL)
67. International Campaign for Freedom in the UAE (ICFUAE)
68. International Center for Supporting Rights and Freedoms, Switzerland
69. International Commission of Journalists (ICJ)
70. International Federation for Rights and Development (IFRD)
71. International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
72. International Media Support (IMS)
73. International Press Institute (IPI)
74. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
75. Irada Association for Community Development
76. Iraqi Al Amal Association
77. Iraqi Network for Social Media (INSM)
78. Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR)
79. Italian Federation for Human Rights (FIDU)
80. Jordanian Coalition against the Death Penalty
81. Joud Foundation for Sustainable Development - Yemen
82. Journalistic Freedoms Observatory
83. Karama Academy for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, Algeria
84. Kenya Human Rights Commission
85. Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
86. Legal Awareness Watch (LAW)
87. Lifespark (Movement against the death penalty) Switzerland
88. MADA-Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms
89. MADPET-Malaysians Against Death Penalty and Torture
90. Maghreb Coordination of Human Rights Organizations

91. Maharat Foundation
92. Mahra Youth Unity Association
93. Maison des Droits de l'Homme du Cameroun (MDHC)
94. MENA Rights Group
95. Metro Center for Journalists Rights & Advocacy
96. Moroccan Association for Human Rights (ADMH)
97. Moroccan Association for the Protection of Cultural Manuscripts
98. Moroccan Coalition Against the Death Penalty
99. Moroccan Coalition for Human Rights Organisations
100. Musaala for Human Rights Organization
101. Mwatana for Human Rights
102. National Center for Peace and Development
103. National Observatory for the Defense of the Civil Character of the State
104. No Peace Without Justice
105. Norwegian PEN
106. Omani Centre for Human Rights
107. Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF)
108. Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR)
109. Peace and Building Foundation
110. Peace Partners
111. PEN America
112. PEN Canada
113. PEN International
114. PEN Iraq
115. Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)
116. Press Freedom Advocacy Association in Iraq
117. Promo LEX Association Moldova
118. Protection Organisation for Digital Rights, Iraq
119. Qarar Foundation for Media and Sustainable Development
120. Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
121. Reprieve
122. Rights Realization Centre
123. Rory Peck Trust
124. SAM for Rights and Liberties
125. Samir Kassir Foundation - SKeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom
126. Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies
127. Sisters' Arab Forum for Human Rights (SAF)
128. Sky Line International for Human Rights
129. Syndicat national des agents de la formation et de l'éducation du Niger  
(SYNAFEN)
130. Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research
131. Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
132. Syrian Organization for Rights and Public Freedoms

133. Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ)
  134. The Advocates for Human Rights
  135. Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM)
  136. Tunis Center for Press Freedom
  137. Tunisian Association for the Right to the Promotion of Difference (ATPDD)
  138. Tunisian Association of Democratic Women
  139. Tunisian Association of Positive Prevention (ATP+)
  140. Tunisian Coalition Against the Death Penalty (CTCPM)
  141. Tunisian League of Human Rights (LTDH)
  142. Vigilance for Democracy and the Civic State
  143. Witness to Innocence
  144. Wogood Foundation for Human Security
  145. Women Defenders of Rights, Freedoms and Sustainable Development,  
Yemen
  146. Women Prisoners Association in Syria
  147. Women's Studies Centre, Palestine
  148. World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)
  149. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
  150. Yemen Archive
  151. Yemeni Women Journalists Network
  152. Youth Idea Initiative
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سوريون  
من أجل  
الحقيقة  
والعدالة  
Syrians  
For Truth  
& Justice



## History

Syrians for Truth and Justice was conceived during the participation of its co-founder in the Middle-East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program, who was driven by a will to contribute to Syria's future. Starting as a humble project to tell the stories of Syrians experiencing enforced disappearances and torture, it grew into an established organisation committed to unveiling human rights violations of all sorts.

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

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