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Middle East/North Africa - Oman

Held incommunicado

Omani authorities persecute online activists

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The frequency with which bloggers and social network users are arrested and convicted in the Sultanate of Oman reflects the appalling state of online freedom of information and expression there.

Cyber-activists who provide the Internet public with information are liable to be arrested, held incommunicado and given long jail terms on charges of insulting the emir or inciting illegal protests and unrest.

"The state of freedom of information and expression is deplorable in Oman," Reporters Without Borders programme director Lucie Morillon said. *"The authorities persecute cyber-activists for defending human rights and fundamental freedoms."*

"It is outrageous to hold activists in secret locations in order to interrogate them for days on end and leave their loved-ones thinking they have disappeared. We call for their immediate and unconditional release."

Saeed Jaddad, a blogger and human rights defender who was very active during the 2011 protests and who is banned from being published in the Omani media, was [sentenced](#) to a year in prison and a fine of 1,000 rials (2,400 euros) by a court in Salalah, in the southern province of Dhofar, on 31 March.

His lawyer [said](#) he was convicted in connection with an October 2014 blog [post](#) in which he compared the 2011 protests in Dhofar to the 2014 protests in Hong Kong.

This was his second jail sentence in the space of two weeks. A court in the capital, Muscat, [sentenced](#) him to three years in prison and a fine of 1,700 rials (4,800 euros) on 8 March on charges of undermining the prestige of the state, inciting protests and using social media to circulate information liable to cause public disturbances.

Held since his arrest at his Salalah home on 21 January, Jaddad had been in the government's sights for years and had often been [arrested](#) and then released on bail. Last October, he was stopped at the airport as he was about to fly to Istanbul for an event organized by Front Line Defenders. He was prevented from leaving under a travel ban imposed in July without his knowledge.

He was then [arrested](#) in December and was held incommunicado for 12 days for interrogation.

Fellow online activist **Taleb Saedi** has [disappeared](#) since his arrest on 23 March for interrogation. He is [known](#) for posting criticism of the government and calls for political and social reform on social networks and for defending activists held by the security forces. He was previously [arrested](#) in July for calling for a peaceful demonstration in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The prominent blogger **Muawiya Al-Rawahi** has been [arrested](#) many times since 2011, the [latest](#) in February, when he was held for week. Following his release, he was [arrested](#) by the Emirati authorities when he tried to enter the neighbouring United Arab Emirates by car on 24 February. There has no news of him since then.

Rawahi is well known for using his blog and social networks to criticize the regime and call for reforms.

These three cases are from being isolated. Many activists are arrested for exercising their right to freedom of information and expression.

Oman is ranked 127th out of 180 countries in the 2015 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).
