

URGENT ACTION

HEALTH OF ACTIVIST SERIOUSLY DETERIORATING

An Omani human rights activist on hunger strike was transferred to Muscat, the capital, on 26 January, despite his deteriorating health. The next day he was taken to court, on a hospital stretcher, charged with “undermining the status and prestige of the state”. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Saeed Jaddad appeared in a court in Muscat on 27 January, on a hospital stretcher. He is charged with “undermining the status and prestige of the state” in relation to his meeting with members of the European Parliament in August 2013 and his calls for political and social reform in Oman. He denied the charges and is now on full hunger strike, refusing to even take liquids. The same day, the first hearing in a separate court case took place in his absence in Salalah, in the southern province of Dhofar, on charges relating to Oman’s Cyber Crimes Law.

Saeed Jaddad is now held in solitary confinement in the Special Department of the police in Muscat. His health is seriously deteriorating.

Following his re-arrest on 21 January, Saeed Jaddad began a hunger strike also refusing to take medicine for his heart condition in protest at his detention. He was hospitalized on 23 January in Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah two days later. On 25 January the police ordered his doctor to release him from hospital in order to fly him some 870km to Muscat to attend his trial. The doctor recommended that Saeed Jaddad should not be moved because of his failing health. A second doctor, appointed by the police, examined Saeed Jaddad and also concluded he was unfit to travel by plane in his current state. However, the next day the police disregarded this medical advice and moved Saeed Jaddad to their headquarters in Salalah.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Omani authorities to release Saeed Jaddad immediately and unconditionally and drop all charges against him since they have detained him solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them, pending his release, to transfer Saeed Jaddad to a hospital where he can receive appropriate medical care.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 MARCH 2015 TO:

Head of State and Prime Minister

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa’id

Diwan of the Royal Court

The Palace, Muscat 113

Sultanate of Oman

Fax: +968 24 735 375

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Interior

His Excellency 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:

Chairman, National Human Rights

Commission

Mr Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Riyami

P.O. Box 29, Postal Code: 103

Bareq A' Shati

Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

Fax: +968 24 648 801

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 318/14. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE20/002/2015/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Saeed Jaddad, a 48-year-old businessman, has called for political and social reform in Oman via his blog, which is restricted to invited readers only, and Facebook. The authorities prevented him from travelling abroad on 31 October 2014 and informed him that they banned him from travelling in July 2014.

The Omani authorities have repeatedly arrested Saeed Jaddad. In December 2011, he took part in peaceful pro-reform demonstrations in Dhofar then was arrested on 14 January 2013, when the authorities held him for six months, including eight days in solitary confinement. He was released at the end of June 2013 but was banned from publishing articles in the national media and the authorities tried to pressure him into signing a statement renouncing pro-reform and human rights activities. He faced further harassment and intimidation the next month.

In August 2013 he faced charges of “undermining the status and prestige of the state” after he called for political and social reform, and held meetings with members of the European Parliament. His first court hearing took place in Muscat on 27 January 2015.

Before his current arrest, Saeed Jaddad was last arrested on 10 December 2014, when officials searched his home and confiscated his phone and computers. They did not tell his family why they were arresting him or where they were taking him. His family repeatedly sought information about his whereabouts but the authorities told them nothing. Amnesty International understands that he was kept and interrogated in the same room for at least five days without being allowed to contact his family or a lawyer. On or around the fifth day of his detention his interrogators tried to force him to sign documents accusing him amongst other things of “harming the country and violating its laws” and “contacting foreign bodies”. He refused to do this and to answer the Prosecutor’s questions without a lawyer present. His detention was then extended a further seven days. He was transferred to Taqah prison (about 40km east of Salalah) where he is understood to have shared a cell infested with cockroaches and other insects with at least 22 common law detainees, and slept on the floor. About four days later he was taken again to the Prosecutor’s office where he again refused to answer questions without his lawyer. On the morning of 22 December he was released on a US\$1200 bail and his son’s passport was confiscated as a guarantee. His first court hearing into this case took place in Salalah in his absence on 27 January 2015.

Amnesty International documented instances of prolonged arbitrary and incommunicado detention in Oman in 2013 and 2014. Cases of torture and other ill-treatment by state security officials during detention were also reported, with activists and critics of the government being subjected to among other things, beating, hooding, mock execution, sleep deprivation and prolonged solitary confinement.

Amnesty International has recorded, in recent years, unnecessary and excessive use of force by the police against peaceful demonstrators, arbitrary arrests during large demonstrations, arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression, and discriminatory laws and practices.

Name: Saeed Jaddad
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 318/14 Index: MDE 20/003/2015 Issue Date: 29 January 2015