

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/saudi-arabia-arab-spring-and-repression-04-08-2011,40746.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Yemen

Deadly summer

Arab Spring and repression continue from Rabat to Manama

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While Bahrain and Saudi Arabia use mainly technical means (including satellite jamming and website blocking) to obstruct media freedom, Yemen and Syria continue to resort to violence. Blogger and reporters covering pro-democracy demonstrations have also been roughed up in Morocco.

BAHRAIN

Lualua TV, a satellite TV station launched by 15 members of the Bahraini opposition on 17 July in London, has been jammed since the first day despite changing frequency regularly. According to Eutelsat, the jamming is being orchestrated from Bahrain. *Lualua TV* wanted to broadcast from Bahrain but it was repeatedly denied permission. It is still managing to broadcast on the Hotbird satellite.

In a 24 July press release, the head of *Lualua TV* said: "A lot of hard work has gone into this channel and we are extremely disappointed that we have had trouble broadcasting our message. It comes as no surprise that the source of the jamming is Bahrain. It is as we had expected. We have followed all regulations in the creation of this station and we will not allow this setback to stop us from broadcasting permanently. We are hoping that the interference has now ended, but if it returns we will just have to find other ways to reinforce our message."

SAUDI ARABIA

The Saudi authorities have been blocking access to the newspaper *Al-Akhbar's website* because of its coverage of events in Bahrain, including the Saudi military intervention.

Amnesty International meanwhile reported on 26 July that its website was rendered inaccessible from within Saudi Arabia after it posted comments criticised a Saudi anti-terrorism bill that aims to reduce the impact on Saudi Arabia of the uprisings in other Arab countries (<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/9...>).

Shelved in 2003, and revived in response to the wave of Arab revolts, the bill would allow the authorities to prosecute anyone suspected of criticising the king or the crown prince. Its deliberately vague wording would leave room for arbitrary interpretation, restricting free speech and media freedom even more in Saudi Arabia. Like many other international NGOs in recent days, Reporters Without Borders urges the Saudi authorities drop this bill, which would violate its international obligations.

Regarded by Reporters Without Borders as an "Enemy of the Internet," Saudi Arabia is currently blocking more 1,200 websites (list: <http://www.albayan.ae/24-hours/2011...>)

SYRIA

Firas Al-Karad, a blogger who was arrested and tortured in March, was arrested again in Deraa on 31 July.

The following are still detained:

- **Mohamed Tahan Jamal**, a member of the League of Arab Writers and the Union of Journalists and a signatory of the Aleppo Appeal for the Nation. He was arrested on 20 July.
- **Abd Al-Majid Tamer** and **Mahmoud Asem Al-Mohamed**, two freelance journalists working for Kurdish news websites who were arrested on 31 May. - **Omar Koush**, who was arrested at Damascus international airport on 1 May as he returned from a conference in Turkey.
- **Anas Al-Ma'arawi**, a journalist and blogger and founder of the first Arab website specializing in the Android system, who was arrested in a Damascus suburb on 1 July.
- **Manaf Al Zeitoun**, who was arrested on 25 March. There has been no news of him since his arrest.
- **Mohamed Nijati Tayara**, a writer and member of the Human Rights League, who was arrested at a security checkpoint on 12 March and was initially accused of disseminating false information. A Homs criminal court dropped the charges after the second amnesty of 21 June. His case was then transferred to a Damascus appeal court which has yet to take a decision. His health deteriorated after he began a hunger strike with other detainees in protest against their detention and he has not had access to appropriate treatment. He is allowed to see his wife and lawyer once a week but no one else.

MOROCCO

The journalist **Hassan Bourah** was attacked in the southwestern city of Guelmim on the evening of 31 July. He was reportedly hit in the stomach and face, insulted and threatened, and his mobile phone and press card were confiscated. He said four men forced him into car and dumped outside the city, far from the demonstrations he had been covering.

Khaled Nasser, 26, a blogger based in the southwestern city of Agadir, sustained a bad head injury (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXrm...>) while filming a demonstration on 17 July in support of the opposition 20 February Movement for his blogs (<http://www.alfotowa.blogspot.com/> <http://khalidaitnasser.blogspot.com/> and <http://khalidpress.ektob.com/>) and for the Agapress (<http://www.agapress.com/>) website. He is a member of the Association of Moroccan bloggers. [A Nasser support page](#) has been created on Facebook.

Mounir El-Kataoui, a reporter for the Moroccan daily *Al-Watan Alan*, was also attacked while photographing and filming a demonstration in Casablanca on 29 May. Despite wearing a vest with the word "Press," he was struck hard in the face and lost consciousness and had to be taken to hospital. The police broke his camera and his glasses.

Mohamed Benba, a 17-year-old blogger (<http://www.mohamedbn.blogspot.com>) based in Agadir, and online journalist **Bachir Lamti**, 28, who edits the *Sahara Press* website, were the victims of intimidation attempts. Benba was threatened on 10 July following a march in Agadir by the 20 February Movement. Members of the Directorate for Territorial Surveillance, an intelligence agency, went to his school to give him a warning after he posted videos of the march on YouTube. Lamti was hit and insulted by a police officer while trying to film a demonstration in Guelmim on 17 July.

YEMEN

Attacks and threats against journalists and confiscation of independent newspapers continue to be common in Yemen.

The editor of the *Akhbar Aden* newspaper was kidnapped on the evening of 25 July by three men who blindfolded him and drove to a remote location where they insulted him and gave him a beating. He was released at around 4 am.

Two sons of **Yahia Nouri**, deputy editor of the newspaper *Al-Mithaq* and spokesperson of the General People's Conference, were physically attacked by government militiamen on 25 July. The journalist **Sofiane Faishi** was attacked the same day in the Sanaa district of Habra. Employed by the government newspaper *Al-Thawra* and a correspondent for *Akhbar Al-Youm* and other local publications, Faishi was one of the first journalists to come out in support of the opposition movement.

Yasser Al-Mou'alimi, a presenter on the government satellite TV station *Yemeniya*, escaped with just a foot injury when gunmen opened fire on his car in an apparent murder attempt as

he was returning home on 21 July. Mou'alimi, who was hospitalized after the shooting, had expressed his support for the opposition protests.

The security forces in the governorate of Taiz confiscated copies of the 19 July issue of the independent weekly *Al-Ahali* and copies of the 19 and 20 July issues of the independent Sanaa-based daily *Akhbar Al-Youmi*.

Mahmoud Al-Hajiri, the editor of the Democratic Party's recently-created newspaper, has been getting telephone threats.

Five gunmen stormed the Sanaa headquarters of the independent weekly *Al-Nada* on the afternoon of 20 July looking for owner and editor **Sami Ghaleb** and members of its staff. Raids of this kind were carried out three days running. The newspaper stopped publishing several weeks ago and its office is closed because of security problems and the probability that its issues would be confiscated.
