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<http://www.rsf.org/yemen-detained-journalist-announces-15-02-2012,41884.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Yemen

US interference

Detained journalist on hunger strike to press for release

15 February 2012

Abdul Ilah Haydar Shae, a Yemeni journalist who has been detained in Sanaa since [16 August 2010](#) for alleged terrorist links, has been on hunger strike since 12 February. He has stopped eating and drinking in an attempt to pressure the authorities to release him.

A court that handles terrorism cases sentenced Shae on [18 January 2011](#) to five years in prison followed by two years of house arrest on a charge of "participating in an armed band and having links with Al-Qaeda."

Although he should have been released under a presidential decree on 1 February 2011, [he was kept in detention](#) as a result of direct pressure from the White House that began the day after the decree, when President Obama voiced "concern" about his possible release because of his supposedly close ties to Al-Qaeda.

Reporters Without Borders urges the Yemeni authorities to free Shae and deplores the interference by the United States, which does not hesitate to violate freedom of expression in order to pursue its war on terror and secure the cooperation of other countries.

Shae's hunger strike ultimatum to the Yemeni authorities comes exactly one year after the US interference in his case. Several hundred people, mainly journalists and human rights activists, demonstrated outside the US embassy in Sanaa on the morning of 11 February, accusing the United States of blocking his release for the sake of its war on terror.

Aged 34, Shae worked for the *Saba* news agency, specializing in covering terrorist issues. In 2009, he got an exclusive interview for *Al-Jazeera* with Anwar Al-Awlaqi, a US-born radical cleric and local Al-Qaeda leader whose sermons are said to have inspired terrorist attacks in the United States.

Thereafter Shae was regarded as an Al-Qaeda media outlet by both the US and Yemeni intelligence services, whose cooperation had been secured through a US policy of support for President Ali Abdallah Saleh's government.

The day before Shae was convicted, the same court sentenced Awlaqi in absentia to 10 years in prison. During his trial, Shae was accused of bringing people to Yemen in order to help them join Al-Qaeda, and taking photos of security agency buildings, embassies and western interests to be targeted by Al-Qaeda. Shae refused to attend several of the hearings because [he disputed the court's legality](#).

A petition signed by several hundred journalists and activists demanding Shae's release and respect for human rights was circulated during the demonstration on 11 February. The Yemeni Journalists Union, which condemns the conditions in which Shae is being held, has not been allowed to visit him. His health is deteriorating rapidly.

Yemen is ranked 171st out of 179 countries in [the 2011-2012 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#). In a 1 December report on the Arab revolutions, Reporters Without Borders analyzed the [methods used by Yemeni authorities to prevent the free flow of information](#) since the start of the uprising in Yemen.