

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/yemen-journalists-still-being-hounded-31-05-2012,42704.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Yemen

Harassment

Journalists still being hounded three months after new president's installation

31 May 2012

[Read in Arabic \(بالعربية\)](#)

Reporters Without Borders reiterates its strong condemnation of the use of violence, threats and legal proceedings to intimidate journalists in Yemen, of which there have many examples in [recent weeks](#).

"As the political instability and violence continues, journalists are constantly harassed by the enemies of media freedom and independence," Reporters Without Borders said. "The Yemeni government must try to protect journalists, including journalists in the most isolated provinces. It must also try to ensure that those responsible for crimes against journalists are brought to justice."

In one of the latest cases, **Mohamed Shabita**, a reporter for the daily *Al-Thawra* and an active member of the journalists' union, was openly threatened and insulted during a phone conversation with the director-general of the civil service ministry's information centre on 27 May because of a [front-page story](#) in that day's issue claiming that around 7,000 of the 50,000 newly-hired state employees already had state jobs and were therefore being paid two salaries.

Amin Al-Safa, a reporter with the official news agency *Saba*, was threatened the same day by the head of Saba's board of governors, Maaz Bajash, for putting out a dispatch with the same claim as Shabita's story. Bajash said that he would make Safa "pay a heavy price," that he would "smash" his head and that not even the journalists' union, of which Safa is also a member, would be able to protect him.

Reporters Without Borders calls on the authorities to take whatever measures are necessary to end this climate of tension and intimidation.

Armed groups in the south of the country meanwhile often [target the media](#) during raids. Many copies of the newspaper *Al-Akhabar Al-Yom* were seized and burned in Aden province on 26 May in a protest against its distribution in the south that was reminiscent of the frequent torching of newspapers by the security forces during last year's uprising.

Two unidentified gunmen fired shots at the doors and windows of *Al-Oumana* editor **Adnan Al-Ajam**'s home in Aden at around 2 a.m. on 25 May. It was unclear whether the shooting attack was a warning or a murder attempt, but it terrified Ajam's family. It may have been prompted by *Al-Oumana*'s coverage of corruption.

Hissam Ashour, a reporter for the *News Yemen* website and the weekly *Al-Nida*, was the target of an apparent murder attempt in Seyoun, in the eastern province of Hadramout, after covering alleged corruption and embezzlement in Hadramout involving the [Fund for Reconstruction](#), an offshoot of the public works ministry.

As result of a complaint by the Fund, Ashour was summoned to appear before a criminal court on 16 May for a hearing at which the plaintiff's lawyer urged the court to "discipline" him for his corruption allegations. As he left the court, Ashour said a car driven by the Fund's lawyer tried to run him down twice, outside a service station and in front of a park.

"This murder attempt is a classic example of the impunity enjoyed by powerful local officials and their acolytes as journalists continue to be hounded," Reporters Without Borders said.

Ashour is still facing criminal proceedings on a charge of "insulting an official" in one of his articles about the [corruption](#) which he claims is rampant within both the Fund and the Hadramout provincial administration.

In Sanaa, **Bouchra Al-Amiri**, a reporter for the daily *Al-Oula*, is being sued by the administration of Al-Sabayn Hospital for covering complaints by the hospital's employees and investigating their allegations of negligence and corruption within the administration. She was summoned before a Sanaa court and questioned for three hours on 16 May.

The hospital's lawsuit names not only Amiri but also *Al-Oula* editor **Mohamed Ayes**h and a member of his editorial staff, **Hani Al-Mouhwaiti**. The hospital is also suing *Al-Akhbar Al-Yom* editor **Ibrahim Moujahid** and one of his reporters, **Faysal Al-Safwani**, who covered the same story.

"These proceedings are clearly designed to intimidate journalists and discourage them from investigating sensitive subjects," Reporters Without Borders added.
