Reporters Without Borders

Middle East/North Africa - Yemen

Abductions

Two journalists killed in air strike while held hostage
28 May 2015

Reporters Without Borders blames the Houthi rebels for the deaths of two journalists in a Saudi-led coalition air strike while held hostage by the rebels in Dhamar province. The plight of media personnel in Yemen continues to be very worrying after UN-sponsored peace talks in Geneva were postponed indefinitely.

The bodies of the two journalists – **Abdallah Qabel**, a reporter for *Yemen Youth TV* and *Belqees TV*, and *Suhail TV* reporter **Youssef Al-Aizari** – were returned to their families on 25 May.

Reporters Without Borders condemns the readiness with which the Houthi rebels kidnap journalists and hold them in locations liable to be the target of coalition air strikes. Their oppressive behaviour has driven many journalists into exile.

"*We point out that attacks on the media and abductions of journalists are regarded as war crimes and as serious violations of the Geneva Conventions*," Reporters Without Borders head of MENA desk Alexandra El Khazen said. "*The houthis must be held accountable for their actions towards civilians, especially journalists*."

The two reporters were kidnapped on 20 May after covering a meeting organized by members of tribes opposed to the Houthi rebels in Al Hadi district in Dhamar, a province to the south of the capital, Sanaa.

They were killed in one of the coalition air strikes targeting military sites controlled by the Houthis. The Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate, which condemned their abduction, said they were being held at the national seismological centre in Jabal Hiran, which was destroyed by a coalition air strike on 21 May.

The families of the two journalists had alerted local and international human rights NGOs and media outlets on 21 May about their abduction and had appealed for help in obtaining their rapid release.

According to the families, Houthi rebels intercepted the two journalists together with the activist Hussein Al-Ayssi at a military checkpoint, searching them and confiscating their equipment.

The families said they were then held along with dozens of other people in a building in Jabal Hiran. *Suhail TV*, *Belgees TV* and *Yemen Youth TV* issued statements condemning their detention and holding the rebels responsible for their fate.

The information ministry and some local media have accused the Houthis of using hostages as human shields. A Houthi rebel representative rejected the charge, accusing the Saudi-led coalition of making no distinction between civilian and military targets.

Journalists abducted or missing

Hassan Othman Bader, a Sudanese journalist working for the Saudi government news agency *SPA* in Sanaa, was detained by rebels in the eastern province of Hadida around the time of the start of the Saudi-led air strikes two months ago. He was freed on the 13 May.

The journalist **Jalal Al-Shar'abi** was abducted from his home on 24 April by members of the Houthi security forces, who fired on his car, badly injuring his driver. Shar'abi's fate is still unknown.

Waheed Al-Sufi, the editor of the daily *Al-Arabiya*, was abducted from a post office on 6 April by

unidentified persons, who reportedly asked him if he worked for the Saudi TV station of the same name.

Yemen is ranked 168th out of 180 countries in the 2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.