

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/yemen-journalists-attacked-threatened-17-05-2012,42637.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Yemen

Endangered information

Journalists attacked, threatened, arrested and prosecuted

17 May 2012

[Read in Arabic \(بالعربية\)](#)

Although President Ali Abdallah Saleh was forced to stand down last February, media freedom violations are continuing at an alarming pace in Yemen. The political instability is allowing the enemies of press freedom to act with complete impunity.

"We condemn the violence, threats, arrests and at times grotesque trials that often beset journalists in Yemen," Reporters Without Borders said. "The new Yemeni authorities must guarantee the safety and protection of all media personnel and must ensure that the prosecutions of journalists stop."

The press freedom organization has compiled a summary of violations that have taken place during the past three weeks.

Trial of two *Al-Jazeera* journalists

Two local correspondents of *Al-Jazeera*, **Ahmed Al-Shalafi** and **Hamdi Al-Bokari**, are being prosecuted by the ghosts of the deposed Saleh regime. A complaint was brought against them in June 2011 by then information minister Hassan Ahmed Al-Lawzi, accusing them of working illegally for the Qatari news channel after the ministry withdrew their accreditation in March 2011 on the grounds that its coverage of the uprising and the government crackdown was biased.

Although there has been a change of government and the new information minister, Ali Al-Amrani, withdrew his predecessor's complaint, an initial hearing in the case against them was held on 14 May. As they boycotted the hearing, the judge adjourned until 21 May and ordered the prosecutor-general to ensure that they turn up for the next hearing.

Reporters Without Borders condemns these surreal proceedings, which are invalid in the absence of a plaintiff. Shalafi and Bokari are being made to pay for *Al-Jazeera's* coverage during the uprising. The pro-Saleh forces seemed determined to continue hounding the two journalists.

Shalafi is also still waiting to recover the passport that was confiscated more than a year ago by national security officials – apparently on direct orders from then interior minister Rashed Al-Masri – when he handed it in for renewal. The lack of a passport poses a major problem for him as TV reporter. He is still unable to recover it although the current prime minister has ordered its return and the new interior minister has assured him of his support.

Al-Jazeera's Sanaa bureau and its employees were repeatedly harassed by the former government, especially at the height of the anti-government protests. With tacit support from the police, a score of gunmen raided its premises on 22 March 2011, removing its transmission equipment. A few days later, the authorities withdrew the accreditation of all of *Al-Jazeera's* journalists, who were already the frequent targets of threats and violence.

Journalists and relatives still targeted

Hissam Ashour, the independent weekly *Al-Nada's* correspondent in Hadramout province,

survived an apparent murder attempt on 16 May. It was the third alleged murder attempt to be blamed on the lawyer of a provincial pension fund that Ashour wrote about last year, accusing it of corrupt practices.

Security forces guarding the main prison in the southern city of Taiz arrested **Abou Baker Al-Youssoufi**, a cameraman with satellite TV station *Yemen Shabab*, on 15 May while he was doing a report on the damage from riots by inmates during the past few weeks. Despite having the prison director's permission to film, he was held for several hours until released on the interior ministry's instructions. The interior ministry and the prison administration gave him an apology.

Anwar Al-Bahri, a news editor with the Yemeni news agency *Saba*, was beaten in front of his children by a dozen armed thugs who burst into his apartment in the Sanaa neighbourhood of Al-Hasba on 30 April, terrifying his family and neighbours. After police arrived, he was taken to Revolution Hospital for treatment to cuts to his face, a broken right hand, and bruises on various parts of his body.

The police managed to arrest two of the assailants, who were put in Sector 5 prison, and then assigned units to patrol the neighbourhood. Nonetheless, it was fellow residents who prevented another attempt by thugs to invade the building on 2 May. The Union of Yemeni Journalists issued a statement holding the interior ministry solely responsible for the second attack and accusing it of "delaying the arrest of the criminals."

Journalist **Mohamed Ali Al-Lozi's** 15-year-old son was kidnapped on 27 April by several unidentified men in a black SUV who threatened and hit him before releasing him several hours later. Lozi reported that three gunmen in a grey saloon car had asked questions about him in his Sanaa neighbourhood earlier the same day.

Wael Al-Absi, a photographer with the *Al-Eshtraki Net* news website, was attacked on 24 April in Freedom Square in Taiz, the site of a permanent opposition sit-in. His assailant was reported to be one of the sit-in's security volunteers who is a member of the Yemeni Reform Rally (an Islamist party) and who has reputation for physically attacking people with different views. Absi, who supports the Yemeni left, was beaten unconscious and was hospitalized with head and eye injuries.

The Sanaa-based journalist **Fathi Abou Al-Nasr** received death threats by telephone from an anonymous caller on 24 April in connection with articles he had recently written for various Yemeni newspapers and websites.

Abdel Qader Al-Mansoub, a journalist who is currently working on corruption cases in the west-coast province of Al-Hudaydah, was also threatened by an anonymous caller the same day.

Saleh Al-Hamati, a Sanaa-based journalist working for *Al-Siyasiyya*, was threatened in the latter part of April by one of the assistants of Sanaa's governor, who reportedly also sent soldiers to his home in his absence to intimidate his family.

Smear campaigns

The weekly *Al-Ahale* and the daily *Akhbar Al-Yom* have been the target of a smear campaign by former President Saleh's son, Ali Abdallah Saleh, who heads the Republican Guard. In a 24 April communiqué, he accused them of spying on military camps with the information ministry's complicity and of cooperating with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and he demanded that their journalists appear before a military court.

These venomous allegations, which were widely quoted in the pro-Saleh electronic media, were prompted by an article posted the previous day on *Al-Ahale's* website claiming that the president's son owned four Apache helicopters in a military camp in Sanhan, the former president's birthplace.
