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Middle East/North Africa - Oman

Black month

Flurry of prosecutions and convictions in Oman

25 January 2013

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The Omani blogger and human rights campaigner **Saeed Jaddad**, arrested on 14 January, was released three days ago on the orders of Sultan Qaboos after posting bail.

According to the [Gulf Center for Human Rights](#), Jaddad was questioned in the absence of his lawyer on 22 January as he was completing the formalities for his release in the public prosecutor's office.

It said the prosecutor asked him to sign an undertaking to stop writing. Jaddad refused and the charges against him of inciting sectarian strife, inciting demonstrations, sit-ins and unrest, undermining the reputation of the state and damaging the reputation of the security forces, were allowed to stand. He could face up to 15 years in prison if found guilty.

Reporters Without Borders deplores his arrest, and considers his detention unreasonable. Such practices are in breach of the sultanate's constitution and international undertaking signed and ratified by the authorities guaranteeing freedom of information and the right to a fair trial.

The press freedom organization calls for all the charges against Jaddad to be dropped and also for the release of other bloggers accused of lèse-majesté and cyber crimes.

Jaddad was summoned on 14 January by the special section of the Muscat police, who immediately arrested him when he arrived. He was kept in solitary confinement until his release on 22 January. Jaddad has documented human rights violations in the Dhofar region in the south of the country and published articles on his blog about the lack of basic freedoms. He had been under pressure from the authorities for several months during which he was questioned several times.

On 16 January the appeal court handed down prison sentences on eight writers and bloggers for lèse-majesté and cyber crimes :

- **Esmaeel Al-Miqbali**, received a one-and-a-half year sentence and a fine of 1,000 rials (1,950 euros). He is held in detention.
- **Hassan Al-Roqaishi** received a one-and-a-half year sentence and a fine of 1,000 rials. He is held in detention.
- **Eshaq Al-Aghbari**, received a one-year sentence. He has been released.
- **Ali al-Hajji** had his sentence reduced from 18 months to one year. He is held in Samail central prison.
- **Mahmoud Al-Jamodi** was given a one-and-a-half year sentence and a fine of 1,000 rials. He is held in detention.
- **Mukhtar Al-Hinai** received a one-year sentence and a fine of 1,000 rials. He is held in detention.

The appeal court also upheld the sentences on three other bloggers and activists, each of whom received a one-year prison term and a fine of 1,000 rials. All are held in detention : **Ahmed Al-Maamari**, **Awad Al-Sawafi** and **Osama Al-Thuwaiya**.

[Reporters Without Borders](#) notes that 28 netizens were convicted in the month of December alone, against a background of social and economic grievances that have alarmed the government.

You can download those documents on our website :

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