

# URGENT ACTION

## ACTIVIST DETAINED AND AT RISK OF ILL-TREATMENT

**Activist Sultan al-Saadi is being held in an undisclosed location in Oman. He has been denied access to his lawyer, and is at risk of ill-treatment and prolonged arbitrary detention. He may be a prisoner of conscience held solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.**

On 29 July, 14 armed men, 12 of them in civilian clothes, seized **Sultan al-Saadi** when he was on his way to Sohar, northern Oman, with his wife and two children. They did not explain who they were or why they were arresting him. He was blindfolded and taken to his house where his laptop and other personal items were taken. He is now being held in an undisclosed location and is being denied access to a lawyer or a visit from his family. He is at risk of ill-treatment and prolonged arbitrary detention.

Sultan al-Saadi was previously arrested in March 2011 with dozens of other activists days after a protest in Sohar when masked armed men, believed to be from Oman's State Security forces, raided his family's house. They did not identify who they were or why they were arresting him. He was released two weeks later without charge, but the following week he was charged with disturbing traffic and blocking the road together with 28 others, six of whom were later found guilty on those charges. He was acquitted and released.

On 12 June 2012, Sultan al-Saadi was arrested again, together with his younger sister, Amina al-Saadi, on charges of insulting the Sultan and violating Oman's information technology law in posts on Facebook and Twitter. Over 35 other activists were also detained around that time on similar charges, many of whom, along with Sultan al-Saadi, were still undergoing trials when the Sultan of Oman pardoned them in March 2013.

During his previous detention, Sultan al-Saadi was kept in solitary confinement on several occasions and not allowed family visits. He was blindfolded whenever he was taken out of his prison cell and is reported to have collapsed and needed medical attention on at least one occasion.

### **Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:**

- Calling on the authorities to release Sultan al-Saadi promptly if he is not to be charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence; if he is held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression he should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging them to ensure that while he is in detention he is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment, his family are told of his whereabouts and he has regular access to his family and lawyer and medical care.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 SEPTEMBER 2013 TO:**

#### Head of State and Prime Minister

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id  
Diwan of the Royal Court  
The Palace  
Muscat 113  
Sultanate of Oman  
Fax: +968 24 735 375  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

#### Minister of the Interior

His Excellency Hamoud bin Faisal bin  
Said Al Busaidi  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of Interior  
PO Box 127, Ruwi 112, Muscat  
Sultanate of Oman  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### **And copies to:**

#### Chairman, National Human Rights Commission

Mr Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Riyami  
P.O. Box 29, Postal Code: 103  
Bareq A' Shati  
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman  
Fax: +968 24 648 801

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# URGENT ACTION

## ACTIVIST DETAINED AND AT RISK OF ILL-TREATMENT

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Between May 2012 and March 2013, dozens of Omani activists were sentenced or were standing trial in relation to the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. The trials began in 2012 after numerous writers, activists and bloggers were arrested in late May and early June 2012. During this time, Oman's Public Prosecution issued a number of statements threatening to take legal action against anyone who publishes "offensive writing" in the media or online deemed to incite others to action "under the pretext of freedom of expression".

The crackdown in 2012 began on 31 May, with the arrest of three activists – Yaqoub al-Kharousi, Habeeba al-Hina'i and Ismail al-Muqbal – who tried to travel to Fohoud oil field – approximately 250km south-west of the capital, Muscat – to document an oil workers' strike that had started a week earlier. In June 2012 several dozen more writers and activists were arrested.

Between December 2012 and January 2013, at least 35 activists were undergoing trials or had already been sentenced to prison terms and fines for insulting the Sultan and violating Oman's information technology law, on the one hand, and/or for public gathering, on the other. Those convicted were to spend six months to a year in prison in addition to paying fines. Some of them appealed their sentences and others were still waiting to be sentenced when the Sultan of Oman issued a pardon on 21 March 2013.

Partly inspired by uprisings elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa, demonstrations in Oman began in early 2011. Protesters set up camp at the Globe Roundabout in Sohar from 27 February 2011, when two people were reportedly killed at a protest of some 2,000 people when police fired rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse them. The protesters were calling for more jobs, an end to corruption and the sacking of certain government officials. Abdullah al-Ghamalasi, a student, was killed and another man was reported to have died during surgery from injuries he sustained at the protest. Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at demonstrators, some of whom threw stones at the police. At least a dozen people were injured. The following day, around 40 people are reported to have been arrested but then released the same day on the orders of Oman's ruler, Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id.

Protesters refused to move from the Globe Roundabout in Sohar until their demands were met but, at around 3am on 29 March, security forces arrested a number of protesters there and removed blockades that had been erected and forced those present to leave. Others who had attended the protests were arrested at their homes. On 1 April hundreds of protesters tried to retake control of the Globe Roundabout area but were prevented by the police; one man is reported to have died afterwards from injuries he sustained. More arrests then followed.

Name: Sultan al-Saadi  
Gender m/f: m

UA: 209/13 Index: MDE 20/004/2013 Issue Date: 5 August 2013