

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/yemen-authorities-begin-to-target-14-03-2011,39788.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Yemen

Foreigners targeted

## Authorities begin to target foreign journalists, six deported

14 March 2011

Reporters Without Borders condemns today's arrests of four Sanaa-based foreign journalists – two American and two British – who were detained by police at 7:30 a.m. at the apartment they shared in Sanaa's old quarter.

The two Britons are **Oliver Holmes**, who strings for the *Wall Street Journal* and *Time*, and **Portia Walker**, who strings for the Washington Post. The Americans are **Haley Sweetland Edwards**, who writes for the *Los Angeles Times* and *AOL News*, and **Joshua Maricich**, who writes for various media including the Yemen Times.

Reporters Without Borders has been told that Maricich and Walker were deported to Ethiopia but has not yet been able to establish the current whereabouts of Homes and Edwards.

The Sanaa authorities said they are arrested for "residing illegally in Yemen." But, according to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, they had been living and working in the country for several years and were known to the authorities, including the information ministry. For the past few weeks, they had been busy covering a wave of protests calling for the removal of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has ruled since 1979.

Reporters Without Borders has also learned that **Patrick Symmes**, a US journalist working for *Outside magazine* and *GQ magazine*, and his Italian photographer, Marco Di Lauro, were detained shortly after passing through a passport control on arrival at Sanaa airport on 12 March and were deported the same day. They had flown to Sanaa after several days reporting on the Yemeni island of Socotra.

Symmes told Reporters Without Borders: *"Our passports were seized and we spent 14 hours in the departure lounge before being put on a flight to Istanbul. The interior ministry's press officer told me by phone that the national security agency had decided to expel us because it had information that we were coming to Sanaa to cover demonstrations and violence. We were not physically mistreated but there were clear threats that this could happen. Our passports were given back once we were on the plane."*

Symmes added that he had entered Yemen on a press visa on 1 March.

"The arrests and deportation of foreign journalists are a very worrying sign of nervousness on the part of the authorities, who are sending a clear signal to other journalists working for foreign media not to report the abusive treatment that demonstrators have been receiving from the security forces," Reporters Without Borders said.

"This is a blatant act of censorship that must be strongly condemned. After targeting Yemeni journalists, the authorities now want to gag the foreign media and impose a news blackout on the events taking place in Yemen."

The authorities are continuing to use violence against Yemeni journalists and the list of abuses gets dangerously longer by the day.

**Hamoud Hazza**, a reporter for the *Saba news agency*, sustained a head injury while covering clashes between the security forces and demonstrators on Change Square in Sanaa on 12 March. **Jaber Saber**, a journalist working for the *Marib Press* news agency, was assaulted by members of the security forces on the square.

**Abdel Salam Jaber**, the editor of the newspaper *Al-Qadiya*, was kidnapped by the security forces while on his way to the square on 12 March. His present whereabouts are not known. The Union of Yemeni Journalists issued a statement that evening describing the incident as "grave." In a separate incident the same day, **Abdel Karim Al-Shaibani**, a reporter for the satellite TV station *Al-Hurra*, was beaten up by thugs on a Sanaa street.

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