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Middle East & North Africa - Yemen

Unending repression

No concessions to media as indiscriminate repression continues in countries with pro-democracy protests

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BAHRAIN

Reporters Without Borders strongly condemns netizen **Zakariya Rashid Hassan's** death in detention on 9 April, six days after his arrest on charges of inciting hatred, disseminating false news, promoting sectarianism and calling for the regime's overthrow in online forums. He moderated a [now-closed forum](#) providing information about his village of origin, Al-Dair. His family has rejected the interior ministry's claim that he died as a result of sickle cell anemia complications.

Three other netizens are still detained. They are **Fadhel Abdulla Ali Al-Marzooq** (arrested on 24 March), **Ali Hasan Salman Al-Satrawi** (arrested on 25 March) and **Hani Muslim Mohamed Al-Taif** (arrested on 27 March). Marzooq and Taif moderated forums in which Internet users could discuss the ongoing events. Satrawi was a forum member. There is no news of **Abduljalil Al-Singace**, a blogger arrested on 16 March.

Reporters Without Borders is also worried that **Nabeel Rajab**, the head of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, has been accused by a military prosecutor of posting a "fabricated" photo of the injuries inflicted on Ali Isa Saqer, one of two people who died in detention on 9 April. Rajab posted the photo on Twitter the same day, saying Saqer had died as a result of mistreatment while in police custody.

As previously noted, the [International Federation for Human Rights](#) (FIDH) reported that the military prosecutor general issued a decree on 28 March – Decision No.5 of 2011 – under which the publication of any information about ongoing investigations by military prosecutors is banned on national security grounds. The decree reinforces the arsenal of measures that authorities can use to [silence any reporting about human rights violations](#).

The public prosecutor meanwhile decided yesterday to press charges against the three senior *Al-Wasat* journalists who were [fired on 3 April](#) for alleged "serious abuses" including publishing fabricated news that undermined the country's international image and reputation. The three – editor **Mansour Al-Jamari**, managing editor **Walid Nouhid** and local news editor **Aqil Mirza** – said they had been sent a summons by fax by the Information Affairs Authority, a government agency that regulates the media.

Their problems began on 2 April, when the national television programme "Media Watch" accused the newspaper, which was founded in 2002, of trying to harm Bahrain's stability and security. The next day, the information ministry announced its closure. After the three had been forced to stand, the Information Affairs Authority reversed this decision and announced that *Al-Wasat* could resume publishing and distributing on 4 April. Two Iraqi journalists who had worked for the newspaper since 2005, **Raheem Al-Kaabi** and **Ali Al-Sherify**, were deported the same day.

Reporters Without Borders has learned of the arrests of two photographers last month. They are **Mujtaba Salmat**, who was arrested on 17 March, and **Hussain Abbas Salim** (also known as

Hussain Al-Khal), who was arrested on 28 March. Both are members of the Bahraini Photography Association. They had been taking photos of the demonstrations in Pearl Square. Salmat had posted some of them on [Facebook](#). The sports journalist Faisal Hayat was arrested on 8 April for participating in the 14 February movement. His photo was displayed on state TV with the label "traitor."

LIBYA

Reporters Without Borders has learned that three *MBC* journalists were arrested in Ajdabiya on the afternoon of 6 April as they were heading to the front at Brega. There are **Hassan Zeitouni**, an Algerian reporter, **Majdi Hilal**, an Egyptian cameraman, and **Mohamed Al-Shouei**, a Libyan cameraman from Benghazi. Zeitouni appeared on the Libyan national TV station at midnight on 8 April and, according to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, was freed on the evening of 9 April.

These arrests bring the number of journalists currently held by the forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi to at least nine.

The following are known to be held by the pro-Gaddafi authorities:

- ▶ Four journalists who were arrested on 5 April: **Clare Morgana Gillis**, a US freelancer who is covering events in the east of the country for *The Atlantic* magazine's website and other US media; **James Foley**, a US reporter working for *GlobalPost.com*, *Stars* and *Stripes* and *Al-Jazeera*; **Manu Brabo**, a Spanish freelance photographer; and **Anton Hammerl**, a South African freelance photographer.
- ▶ **Lotfi Ghars**, a journalist with Tunisian and Canadian dual citizenship working for *Al-Alam*, who has been held since 16 March.
- ▶ The Syrian journalist **Rana Akbani**. She has been held since 28 March.
- ▶ Two *Al-Jazeera* journalists who have been held since the start of March – **Ammar Al-Hamdane** (Norwegian) and **Kamel Ataloua** (British). Their Mauritanian colleague, **Ahmed Vall Ould el-Dine**, was freed yesterday.

The exact number of Libyan journalists currently held is not known.

According to the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#), the American freelance journalist **Matthew VanDyke** has been missing in Libya since mid-March. He is believed to have been captured by pro-Gaddafi forces near the eastern city of Brega.

The two *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reporters, **Dmitry Steshin** and **Aleksandr Kots**, who were reported missing at around noon on 8 April were released by rebels on the evening of the same day.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Ahmed Mansoor, a blogger and human rights activist who had reported receiving death threats in recent days, was finally arrested on 8 April. The arrest was carried out by ten men who first searched his home for three hours, seizing his computer, books and documents. **Farhad Salem Al-Shehhi**, who had helped him keep his blog, was arrested the next day. Mansoor was one of the signatories of a petition calling for direct elections and had talked about the petition in several TV programmes. A third netizen, **Nasser bin Ghaith**, was arrested on 10 April.

No charge has so far been brought against any of them but it seems that their arrests were prompted by their comments about the unrest in other parts of the Arab world and their calls for democratic reform in the UAE.

SYRIA

Zine Cherfaoui, an Algerian journalist working for the daily *El-Watan* who was denied entry on arriving at Damascus international airport on 7 April, was asked by the Syrian authorities to leave on 10 April, after spending three days at the airport.

Samira Al-Masalma, the editor of the government daily *Tishrin*, was fired by the authorities on 9 April for giving the Qatar-based *Al-Jazeera* an interview the day before about the protests in the southern city of Deraa. In the course of the interview, she called on the government to arrest those responsible for the bloodshed in Deraa earlier that day. "*The instructions not to fire on demonstrators were not respected,*" she said. "*If this was the work of a third party, which is what I think, the security forces should bring them to justice.*" *Al-Jazeera* reported that 37 civilians were killed in clashes in Deraa, Homs and Harasta on 8 April. Masalma said she was being replaced by the newspaper's business editor **Munir Al Wadi**.

Mohamed Zaid Mistou, a Norwegian journalist of Syrian origin who writes for the *Al-Arabiya.net* website, is still being held by the Syrian authorities. He was arrested on 7 April. According to the Jordanian media, two journalists working for *Arab Broadcasting Services*, **Akram Abu Safi** and **Sobhie Naeem Al-Assal**, were arrested on 24 March. *Al-Hayat* reporter **Amer Matar** has been held since 1 April and **Zaher Omareen** has been held since 27 March. Doha Hassan was freed after she was interrogated for nearly two weeks.

The Kurdish blogger **Kamal Hussein Sheikou**, the blogger **Ahmed Hadifa** and the journalist and writer **Mohamed Dibo** are all still detained. They have been held since the start of the protests.

George Baghdadi, who reports for several media including the Spanish news agency *EFE* and the German public radio station *Deutsche Welle*, was released on 5 April, after being arrested on 1 April while covering demonstrations in the port city of Latakia.

YEMEN

Oussama Ghalib, the editor of the independent newspaper *Al-Nass*, and the reporter **Mansour Al-Jaradi** received death threats by telephone on 10 April about a report that the authorities were unable to control Sanhan, the region President Ali Abdullah Saleh is from.

Mohamed Al-Shaibani was distributing copies of the independent daily *Al-Oula* on the evening of 10 April in the Sanaa neighbourhood of Naqim when he was physically attacked by government supporters, who accused the newspaper of stirring up unrest.

Police stationed at Sanaa's Bab El-Yemen gate intercepted copies of the 9 April issue of the newspaper *Al-Sharia* that were to have been distributed in Taiz and other southern provinces.
