

Rights groups slam Houthis as Yemeni reporters face execution

Author:

Sat, 2020-11-07 21:30

LONDON: Four Yemeni journalists arbitrarily detained by Houthi militants since 2015 face death sentences and are being held in appalling conditions, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has revealed.

The Houthi-controlled Specialized Criminal Court in Sanaa sentenced the four to death in April after a show trial involving politically motivated charges of treason and spying.

The revelation comes amid growing criticism of Houthi mistreatment of journalists and whistleblowers.

Houthi authorities arrested the four journalists – Abdul Khaleq Amran, Akram Al-Walidi, Hareth Humaid and Tawfiq Al-Mansouri – during a 2015 raid on a hotel room in Sanaa, family members told HRW.

During their time in detention, they have faced restricted family visits, lack of access to legal assistance and dismal medical care.

“Houthi authorities are using compromised courts to punish journalists for doing their job, adding to the armed group’s bleak record of abuses,” said HRW Yemen researcher Afrah Nasser.

“These journalists should never have been arrested in the first place, much less face the death penalty.”

The UN Group of Eminent Experts for Yemen warned that Houthis have used the Specialized Criminal Court in Sanaa “as an instrument to suppress dissent, intimidate political opponents and develop political capital to be used in negotiations.”

Before the 2015 raid, the journalists worked for local media outlets and reported on Houthi human rights abuses.

None of the families know where the four are held. Family members have expressed serious concerns that Houthi authorities will soon move forward with executions.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middle East](#)

[Yemen](#)

[Houthis](#)

[Human Rights Watch](#)

Houthis condemned for failing to protect journalists
Prominent Afghan journalist dies in Kabul blast

[Govt-controlled areas in Yemen report zero virus cases](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-11-07 21:23

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's national coronavirus committee announced on Friday night recording zero coronavirus cases in the government-controlled provinces, even as the country braced for the second wave of the virus.

The national committee, a government body that documents coronavirus in the government-controlled provinces, said in a statement that it recorded two recoveries in the southern province of Laj and zero confirmed cases or

deaths.

The total number of confirmed cases since April 10 when the first case was detected is 2,066, including 601 deaths and 1,377 recoveries. The Houthis, who control densely populated provinces, refuse to disclose the number of coronavirus cases. Their ministry of health had reported only four cases, including one death.

During the past couple of weeks, health facilities and PCR testing labs in the interim capital of Yemen, Aden, and the other liberated provinces have reported fewer infections, Dr. Ishraq Al-Subaee, a spokesman for the committee, told Arab News on Saturday. "It seems that the first wave of the virus is coming to an end," Dr. Ishraq said.

In October, health authorities in the southeastern province of Hadramout closed a major quarantine center in the port city of Al-Mukalla, the province's capital that treated dozens of cases due to the sharp decline in coronavirus cases.

But despite recording zero cases on Friday, the committee ordered health facilities across Yemen to prepare for a second wave of the virus as a severe winter is affecting parts of the country.

Headed by Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed, the committee on Thursday approved fresh measures to stem a potential outbreak of the virus, including boosting capacity of health facilities, raising public awareness about health guidelines, enhancing cooperation between the committee and local authorities for a unified response and approving an emergency fund. The official news agency SABA reported that the prime minister stressed learning lessons from the first wave of the coronavirus.

Yemen has been hit hard by the virus since April. Hundreds of people, including dozens of health care workers, have died as cases overwhelmed local hospitals. Local health officials told Arab News that the virus and other diseases killed 1,800 people in May in Aden alone. In Sanaa, several graveyards in Sanaa and other provinces in northern Yemen were closed due to the influx of the dead. Local and international health workers believe that the number of virus fatalities is much higher than official reports say.

As daily coronavirus infections reached zero, experts warned that sporadic new cases in different cities last week could be a sign of a second wave. Abdulla bin Ghouth, a professor of community medicine and epidemiology at Hadramout University's College of Medicine and an adviser to the health minister, told Arab News that official reports about the decreasing cases showed the coronavirus curve was going down.

However, "the few confirmed cases in Marib and Aden are a warning of the second wave," bin Ghouth said. He added that the war-torn country was not ready for a second wave and was repeating the mistakes of the first wave of the pandemic. "Hospitals and quarantines are not ready. There is still not enough PCR testing labs and preventive measures are very poor," he said.

Normal Life

Yemenis across the country have largely abandoned health coronavirus guidelines, even before the country reported few cases. People attend large gatherings such as weddings and mass prayers and almost no one wears a mask. In Al-Mukalla on Friday, thousands of worshippers without masks thronged Omar mosque for Friday prayers. Among the worshippers were health workers, teachers and journalists – who have long preached to people about adhering to social distancing and other health guidelines.

Even the elderly and people with chronic diseases who used to wear masks during prayers now hug and shake hands without masks. In his weekly sermon, the imam warned worshippers against the “evils” of globalization and its calls for women’s liberation, ignoring government calls to prepare for a second wave of the virus.

People said that they did not wear masks as they had developed herd immunity. “I do not wear masks because I was infected with the virus in Ramadan. Also, the prices of the masks are high compared to my salary. Finally, my city did not report any new case for the past ten days,” Mohammed Ahmed Bayazid, a worshipper, told Arab News.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Yemen](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Arab coalition seizes huge drugs shipment in Yemen heading to Houthis
Houthis blamed for resurgence of infant polio in Yemen

Hundreds in Baghdad demand ouster of US troops from Iraq

Author:

AFP

ID:

1604763048042611800

Sat, 2020-11-07 14:56

BAGHDAD: Several hundred protesters gathered in the Iraqi capital on Saturday afternoon to demand US troops leave the country in accordance with a parliament vote earlier this year.

"We will choose resistance if parliament's vote is not ratified!" read one of the banners at the demonstration, which took place near an entrance to the high-security Green Zone, where the US embassy and other foreign missions are located.

Others carried signs bearing the logo of Hashed Al-Shaabi, a state-sponsored network of armed groups including many supported by Iraq's powerful neighbor Iran.

Following a US strike on Baghdad in January that killed top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and the Hashed's deputy head, outraged Iraqi parliamentarians voted to oust all foreign forces deployed in the country.

The US has sent thousands of troops to Iraq since 2014 to lead an international coalition helping Baghdad fight Daesh.

Washington has drawn down those forces in recent months to around 3,000, and other coalition countries have also shrunk their footprint.

Starting in October 2019, rockets regularly targeted those troops as well as diplomats at the US embassy.

Over the summer, there was a marked increase in attacks against coalition logistics convoys using roadside bombs.

Enraged by the ongoing attacks, the US in late September threatened to close its Baghdad embassy and carry out bombing raids against hard-line elements of the Hashed.

Pro-Iran factions announced a temporary truce in October that put an end to the attacks, with no rockets targeting the embassy or foreign troops since. Iraq has long been caught in the struggle for influence between its two main allies, the US and Iran, with the tug-of-war intensifying under US President Donald Trump.

Baghdad has been closely monitoring the results of the US presidential elections, seeing a change in the White House as a sign that tensions between Washington and Tehran could decrease.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq](#)

[US troops](#)

Protester killed in southern Iraq as tensions flare again Iraq ratifies new election law, paving way for early vote

[UK, EU warn Israel over West Bank evictions, demolitions](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1604761464262417500

Sat, 2020-11-07 18:26

LONDON: The UK and EU have warned Israel over its campaign to turn a West Bank region into a “firing zone for training exercises.”

Israel has faced increasing scrutiny in recent weeks after it pushed forward with evictions and demolitions across the West Bank.

Masafer Yatta is one of the poorest areas in the occupied Palestinian territory. Traditional shepherd villages and caves that make up the region rely on an NGO-funded water supply and solar panels.

Palestinian shepherds rejected Israel’s proposal of “part-time” living arrangements for residents.

Muhammad Moussa Abu Aram, a Masafer Yatta resident, said he dreaded being forced to leave his home, adding that “every aspect of life is difficult here” due to Israeli military activity.

Both the UK and EU have condemned Israel’s demolition campaign. Sven Kuhn von Burgsdorff, EU representative to Palestine, said during a recent visit to the region: “We call on Israel not to carry out demolitions in the communities, which are highly vulnerable.”

He added: “Displacing the communities would be in contravention with Israel’s obligations as an occupying power under international humanitarian law.”

A British consulate spokesman in Jerusalem said: “Demolitions and evictions cause unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and damage the prospects of a two-state solution.”

Brussels and London have sent envoys to inspect recent Israeli actions in the area. Meanwhile, the UN announced on Thursday: “So far in 2020, 689 structures have been demolished across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.”

West Bank resident Yasser Abu Al-Kbash told America’s National Public Radio that the recent demolitions were deliberately timed.

“I am 99 percent certain this was taking advantage of the US elections. There were no journalists around,” he said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Israel](#)

[West Bank](#)

[UK](#)

[EU](#)

[demolitions](#)

Israel razes most of Palestinian Bedouin village in West Bank on US election day
Palestinian fires on Israel troops in West Bank, shot dead: army

[UAE amends laws on personal status, civil transactions and criminal procedures](#)

Sat, 2020-11-07 16:31

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced on Saturday amendments to its personal status, civil transaction and penal and criminal procedure laws.

The amendments come as part of the UAE's efforts to develop its legislative

and investment environment and to foster tolerance, Emirates News Agency (WAM) reported.

The new laws, which were approved by President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, include:

- Allowing non-citizens to choose the laws that would apply to them regarding inheritance in the personal status law
- Decriminalizing acts in the penal code that do not cause harm to others
- Allowing the federal public prosecutor the right to determine misdemeanors and irregularities that are subject to the penal code
- Abolishing the article that provides mitigating excuses for committers of so-called 'honor crimes' and subjecting them to provisions that apply to murder crimes in the penal code

The amendments to personal status and civil transaction codes aim to ensure the stability of the financial interests of foreign investors in UAE, according to WAM, while amendments to the penal code and criminal procedure law aim to protect "personal liberties and societal security."

A number of amendments to the penal code decriminalize acts that do not cause harm to others and lift ambiguity from texts that considered these acts as punishable by law.

The amendments also expand the scope of the application of the criminal order so that the federal public prosecutor, in agreement with public prosecutors in local judicial authorities, has the right to determine misdemeanors that are subject to provisions of the penal code.

They aim to facilitate procedures and alleviate pressure on the judiciary system, especially in cases of minor crimes.

The laws are effective immediately and, according to WAM, reflect the progressive measures to improve living standards for people from around the world living in the UAE.

With the UAE home to more than 190 nationalities, amendments to existing laws and the introduction of the new laws seek to allow non-Emirati residents to have their personal affairs dealt with according to the law of their home country and ensuring the UAE is accommodating to their needs, WAM reported.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[UAE](#)

UAE law targets sexual harassment, forced labor Social media 'influencers' are being reined in under new UAE laws – will other Gulf nations follow lead?