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First UA: 004/2024 Index: MDE 31/7627/2024 Yemen of January 26, 2024.

YEMEN DETAINED JOURNALIST ON HUNGER STRIKE

Ahmad Maher, a 28-year-old Yemeni journalist, was arrested on August 6, 2022 by security forces in Aden. He is on trial before the Aden-based Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) on charges of disseminating false and misleading news and forging identity documents. During interrogations at the Dar Sa'ad police station, security forces subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment to force him to "confess" to being involved in an attack on Dar Sa'ad police station in March 2022. He has been denied access to adequate healthcare including for injuries sustained because of torture. His trial rights have been severely violated including his right to adequate defense, to access a lawyer of his choosing, to presumption of innocence and to not self-incriminate, rendering his detention arbitrary. According to his family, Ahmad Maher has been on hunger strike since January 17, to demand a fair trial, amid mounting concerns for his health.

Write to the President of the Southern Transitional Council through the Ambassador, urging him to:

- Drop all charges against Ahmad Maher solely related to the exercise of his human rights.
- Release him unless tried for internationally recognizable offences in proceedings meeting international standards for fair trial, excluding "confessions" extracted under torture or duress.
- Ensure that Ahmad Maher is protected from further torture and other ill-treatment and that he is given, without delay, access to adequate medical care and regular access to his lawyer and family.

You can also write to the Yemeni Ambassador:

His Excellency Jamal Abdullah Yahya AL-SALLAL
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Yemen
54 Chamberlain Avenue
Ottawa, ON K1S 1V9
Tel: (613) 729-6627 Fax: (613) 729-8915
Email: yeminfo@yemenembassy.ca

***If you are on X (formerly Twitter), you can message the President of the Southern Transitional Council, Major General Aidaros Alzubidi through his handle, @AidrosAlzubidi

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On September 4, 2022, Dar Sa'ad police station released a video which was shared on social media and national media news outlets featuring Ahmad Maher. In the video, which Amnesty International analyzed, Maher appears to "confess" to criminal offences including the forgery of identity documents for members of the military and his knowledge of assassination schemes against two STC military generals. According to his lawyer, the video, which violates his right to presumption of innocence, was

not requested by the prosecution and was not recorded in their presence. A few days after the video was made public, a member of the criminal prosecution interrogated Maher in Dar Sa'ad police station in the presence of members of Dar Sa'ad security forces who were all, according to Ahmad Maher's relatives, involved in his torture. During questioning by the prosecution, Ahmad Maher retracted his "confession", stating that he was forced to make it under duress, and asked for referral to medical treatment. The prosecution requested the director of the police station to refer Maher for treatment, but the request was refused.

On September 15, 2022, Ahmad Maher was transferred to Bir Ahmad prison, where he continues to be held, without access to a lawyer.

All parties to the conflict in Yemen have perpetrated grave human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment, and unfair trials. In November 2023, the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen [reported](#) that STC affiliated forces are detaining, subjecting to enforced disappearance, or threatening journalists and activists who publicly criticize them and are forcing them to sign or deliver "confessions". The Panel also documented that STC-affiliated forces are systematically torturing detainees in formal and secret prisons.

In July 2018, Amnesty International published [a report](#) on enforced disappearances and detention violations committed by UAE-backed security forces, including the Security Belt forces in southern Yemen. Many arrests appeared to be based on unfounded suspicions and personal vendettas. Among those targeted were former fighters who fought in the 2015 battles to rout the Huthis from the south and who were later seen as a threat; sympathizers and members of the Hadi-aligned al-Islah Party, Yemen's Muslim Brotherhood branch; as well as activists and critics of the coalition.

Please send your appeals until March 22, 2024. If there's the need for further action after that date, the UA will be duly updated.