

JOINT STATEMENT BY HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES GROUPS

Human Rights Groups Condemn Arbitrary Detention of Yemeni Human Rights Defenders and Urge Authorities to Permit Advocates to Freely Travel and Conduct Human Rights Work

June 19, 2018

The undersigned human rights and civil liberties organizations condemn the unlawful detention yesterday of Radhya Almutawakel and Abdulrasheed Alfaqih, two prominent Yemeni human rights defenders with Mwatana Organization for Human Rights, and call on all parties to the armed conflict in Yemen to respect the work of human rights advocates.

Authorities working at government-controlled Seiyun city airport detained the advocates on June 18, 2018, as they were preparing to travel abroad to an event at the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue in Oslo, Norway. The authorities confiscated Almutawakel and Alfaqih's telephones and other personal belongings, and held the advocates for approximately 12 hours. The advocates were given no reasons for the detention, but were told by the detaining Yemeni government security forces that they were not permitted to travel and were being arrested at the behest of the Saudi and United Arab Emirates (UAE)-led Coalition. After their release, they received further threats from officials that they could be detained again soon.

The actions of the governments are in breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including the right to liberty and to be free from arbitrary detention (Article 9), the right to liberty of movement and to leave any country (Article 12), and the rights to freedom of expression (Article 19), peaceful assembly (Article 21), and association (Article 22). The detentions also undermine government commitments in The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Resolution A/RES/53/144, which protects the rights of human rights advocates to promote human rights at the national and international levels.

The arbitrary detention of Almutawakel and Alfaqih comes at a time when the United Nations considers Yemen the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Yemen's war continues, in which all sides have committed severe human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. Millions of Yemenis are suffering from the devastating consequences of violations committed by the Saudi-led Coalition, the Houthis and other armed groups including al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. The UAE-led offensive on the port of Hodeidah, critical for the supply of humanitarian aid to the country, threatens to exacerbate this already dire situation.

The work of Radhya Almutawakel, Abdulrasheed Alfaqih, and other human rights defenders to document the rights violations in Yemen is therefore all the more vital to

ensure that the global community remains informed of the rights situation in one of the most underreported conflicts in the world.

[Mwatana](#) is a globally [recognized](#) Yemeni civil society organization, which impartially [investigates violations](#) by all parties to the war in Yemen.

The detentions of Almutawakel and Alfaqih are part of a pattern of harassment and repression of human rights work in Yemen committed by all sides. Alfaqih was briefly detained by authorities loyal to Yemeni President Hadi on June 14, 2018. In 2017, the Yemeni embassy in Washington, D.C. wrote a letter to U.S. Senators [attacking](#) the reputation of Mwatana. The Houthis have repeatedly beaten, threatened, [harassed](#), and detained representatives of Mwatana and other advocates. More than ten journalists remain arbitrarily and unlawfully detained by the Houthis since early 2015. Throughout the conflict, human rights defenders and journalists have been harassed, threatened, beaten, arbitrarily detained, and forcibly disappeared in both government and Houthi-controlled territory.

The undersigned groups call on the Yemeni government authorities and the Saudi and UAE-led Coalition authorities to provide full reparations for the unlawful detention of Almutawakel and Alfaqih, including public acknowledgment of wrongdoing, apology, and a commitment to refrain from any further hindrance of human rights work, including any threats of detention or restrictions on travel. The groups call on all sides to the conflict, including the Houthis, to respect the rights of human rights defenders. The signatories also call on other states, particularly those allied with or who support the warring parties, to urge the parties to the conflict to uphold the rights of defenders, to increase their efforts in ending all human rights abuses, and to cease ongoing law of war violations in Yemen.

We stand in solidarity with our human rights advocate colleagues in Yemen.

Amnesty International

Article 36

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)

Control Arms Coalition

European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR)

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

Global Justice Clinic (NYU School of Law)

Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)

Human Rights Clinic (Columbia Law School)

Human Rights Watch

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

PAX

Relieve

Rights Watch (UK)

World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) within the framework of the Observatory
for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders