

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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March 27, 2018

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi
Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Re: Alleged Abusive Detention and Forced Return of Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees

Your Highness,

We write to inquire regarding the role of the United Arab Emirates in alleged arbitrary and abusive detention of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in and from areas of Yemen under government control.

Human Rights Watch has documented abuse and arbitrary detention of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees—including Eritreans, Ethiopians, and Somalis—in the Buraika detention center in Aden, Yemen. Human Rights Watch documented beatings and other forms of mistreatment, including of children, and of sexual assault, at the center.

Col. Khalid Al-Alwani, former police chief of Buraika, served as Director of the Department of Refugees Affairs and Migration under the Ministry of Interior until mid-March, according to interviews and media reports. Despite being relieved of his position, he remains in command of the center.

People detained in the center travelled to Yemen by sea, landing at various points along Yemen's coast; soldiers at checkpoints then arrested and coordinated with plainclothes men to transport them to the center. Migrants reported that others detained in the center were forcibly deported under dangerous conditions and without

being given an opportunity to seek protection or otherwise challenge their removal.

Multiple sources have alleged that Alwani receives some support from the coalition operating in Yemen and that UAE-backed Yemeni forces, like the Security Belt, have stopped migrants at checkpoints and coordinated to transport them to the center. Alwani has been quoted in local news claiming he coordinates with the coalition in arresting and deporting migrants.

We seek further information on the above concerns, and kindly request a response by April 4, 2018 so that we may reflect the UAE's position in our upcoming reporting on these issues:

1. Did or does the UAE currently provide any support—financial, logistical, or other—to the Yemeni government or Yemeni groups that detain migrants in inhuman and degrading conditions and deport asylum seekers without giving them an opportunity to seek protection?
2. What is the nature of UAE support to the Buraika center, its commander, Colonel Alwani, to the security forces working at the center or to security forces working at checkpoints, including the Security Belt, that have arrested migrants and then transported them to the Buraika center?
3. Have any investigations been undertaken into allegations of abuse, including cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, torture, or sexual assault of migrants, asylum seekers, or refugees by UAE-backed Yemeni forces or other individuals the UAE supports? If so, please provide us the findings of these investigations and any action taken in response.

As we have done in the past, we will endeavor to include your official full response in English and Arabic on our website.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Michael Page

Deputy Director

Middle East and North Africa

Human Rights Watch