

Document #2036129

OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Yemen: Journalists under attack from all quarters, says Bachelet

GENEVA (6 August 2020) – The UN's human rights chief said today she is appalled by the high number of human rights violations against journalists across Yemen - including killings, disappearances and death sentences in violation of international human rights law.

Since the start of April, the UN Human Rights Office has documented one assassination, one abduction, three cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, the sentencing of four journalists to death in violation of international human rights law and jailing of six others, three physical assaults and threats of physical violence. These are violations and abuses carried out by all parties to the armed conflict in Yemen.

"It is with great sadness we have seen the situation in Yemen slide from bad to worse, to the point now where it is considered the world's largest humanitarian crisis," said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet. "Those responsible for reporting on the atrocities committed during the armed conflict and the accompanying pain and suffering endured by civilians are themselves being targeted.

"Journalists are under attack from all quarters. They are killed, beaten and disappeared; they are harassed and threatened; and they are jailed and sentenced to death for merely trying to shine a light on the brutality of this crisis."

On 11 April, the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a sentenced four journalists to death and six others to jail on charges of "publishing and writing news, statements, false and malicious rumors and propaganda with the intent to weaken the defence of the homeland, weaken the morale of the Yemeni people, sabotage public security, spread terror among people and harm the country's interest".

Concerns are growing that the *de facto* authorities might carry out the death sentence against the four journalists, despite a pending appeal of the conviction before the Appellate Division of the Specialized Criminal Court.

The UN opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances. The death penalty is an extreme form of punishment reserved for the "most serious crimes", appertaining only to crimes of extreme gravity involving intentional killing. If used at all, it should only be imposed after a trial with scrupulous respect of the guarantees of fair trial as stipulated in international human rights law.

During their five-year detention, the four journalists have been denied family visits, access to their lawyer and healthcare. They were also reportedly tortured and subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

In April, the Specialized Criminal Court ordered that the other six journalists who received prison sentences be released and placed under police surveillance. Only one of them has been released.

On 2 June, in Dar Sa'ad district, Aden governorate, well-known photojournalist Nabeel Al-Qitee'e was assassinated in front of his house by unidentified gunmen. Al-Qitee'e, who worked for Agence France Presse, had been reporting on the so-called Southern Movement and the clashes between the Yemen Government and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in Abyan.

Since the start of the conflict in March 2015, the UN Human Rights Office has documented 357 human rights violations and abuses against journalists. There have been 28 killings, two enforced disappearances, one abduction, 45 physical assaults, 184 arbitrary arrests and detentions, 16 death or physical violence threats against journalists, 24 seizures of media organizations, 26 closures of TV channels and newspaper companies, 27 attacks on media organizations and houses of journalists, and four death sentences imposed on journalists in violation of international human rights law.

"The safety of journalists is essential to the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of us all, and in the context of armed conflict they play a vital role in uncovering the truth and holding the parties to the conflict to account publicly," Bachelet said.

"Journalists are also protected under international humanitarian law as civilians. Attacks against them may amount to war crimes, and those responsible for such crimes must be brought to justice."

Bachelet called on all parties to the conflict in Yemen to release detained journalists, and to investigate and punish those responsible for attacks and threats against journalists. Victims and their families have a right to justice, truth and reparations.

The High Commissioner recalled that journalists should not be penalized for carrying out their legitimate activities. She urged the de facto authorities to set aside the death sentences imposed on the four journalists in Sana'a and immediately order the release of the five other journalists who have not yet been released. She also reminded all parties to the armed conflict in Yemen that under international humanitarian law, the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees, is prohibited.

ENDS

ecoi.net summary:



UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, appalled by several severe human rights violations against journalists (killings; abductions; arbitrary arrests; death sentences)

Country:

Yemen

Source:

[OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)

Original link:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26152&LangID=E>

Document type:

Appeal or News Release

Language:

English

Published:

6 August 2020

Document ID:

2036129

Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and
Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien
T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583
F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
Imprint & Disclaimer
F.A.Q.
Data Protection Notice

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

