

Yemen: Huthis must stop executions and release dozens facing LGBTI charges

The Huthi de facto authorities must urgently halt planned executions and end the persecution of people based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, said Amnesty International, after two Huthi-run courts in Yemen sentenced more than 40 individuals either to death, flogging or prison over charges related to same-sex conduct.

On 23 January, the criminal court in Dhamar in northern Yemen sentenced nine individuals to death – with seven sentenced to be executed by stoning, and two by crucifixion – while 23 others were handed prison sentences between six months and 10 years on charges including “homosexuality”, “spreading immorality”, and “immoral acts”. On 1 February, the court of first instance in Ibb in southern Yemen handed death sentences to 13 students and flogging to three others on charges of ‘spreading homosexuality’.

“The reports that the Huthi de facto authorities have sentenced nine people to death on charges related to same-sex conduct, in gruesome public spectacles aimed at spreading fear in the population, are deeply distressing. The death penalty is the ultimate cruel inhuman and degrading punishment, its use is abhorrent regardless of the method of execution and must be condemned in all circumstances,” said Grazia Careccia, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

The authorities must immediately and unconditionally release all individuals who are held solely based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. All forms of violence, harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression must stop.
Grazia Careccia, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa

“The Huthi de facto authorities must immediately quash the death sentences against these individuals and drop all charges related to their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.”

Amnesty International’s Crisis Evidence Lab analyzed three videos, first appearing on social media on 24 and 25 January 2024 showing at least two individuals being flogged in public by an individual in security uniform. The videos are believed to have been shot in front of the men’s homes and in the presence of Huthi officials.

“Public flogging is a cruel and inhuman punishment which violates the absolute prohibition on torture and other ill-treatment under international law and should not be carried out under any circumstances. It is appalling and unacceptable that the Huthi-controlled judiciary continues to gravely violate human rights by interfering in people’s private lives by prosecuting individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity,” said Grazia Careccia.

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Amnesty International is also calling on the government of Yemen to also align with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including by repealing legislation criminalizing same-sex intimacy and removing any forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

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Background

All parties to the conflict in Yemen continue to prosecute and target LGBTI people with arbitrary arrest; torture, including rape and other forms of sexual violence; threats; and harassment.

Amnesty International has documented how the security forces of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), the Huthi de facto authorities, and the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) in Yemen, targeted 17 people with non-conforming sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics with arbitrary arrest, torture, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, threats, and harassment between 2020 and 2022.