

Oman: End the Detention of Women Human Rights Defenders

On 19 June 2012, due to their deteriorating health, women human rights defenders Basma Al-Keumy, lawyer, and Basma Al-Rajehy, writer and TV broadcaster, ended their hunger strike aimed at their administrative detention which continued until 24 June 2012 and the lack of access to their families and lawyers.



Both women were arrested on 11 June 2012 along with approximately 20 other protestors when security forces and anti-riot police broke up a three-day protest held in front of the General Police Headquarters in the capital of Muscat. The protestors demands included, respect for human rights and the release of all detained human rights defenders in Oman.

Administrative detention, which is often used by the security forces in Oman, is a procedure under which detainees are held without charge or trial. It violates the detainees' rights to a fair trial, guaranteed by article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is considered to be part of the international customary law.

Basma Al-Keumy and Basma Al-Rajehy are still not given proper access to their families and lawyers. According to some reports received, Basma Al-Keumy experiences severe asthma attacks, while Basma Al-Rajehy is vomiting blood. Both defenders are suffering from overall fatigue and they have no access to medical care in the prison.

Al-Keumy and Al-Rajehy are amongst the most recognizable human rights defenders who led the protests that have swept Oman in February 2011. Al-Keumy was previously detained in 2011 and released without any charges levied against her. Al-Rajehy was kidnapped and tortured also in 2011.

On 25 June 2012, Basma Al-Keumy, and Basma Al-Rajehy together with a group of detained human rights defenders and activists attended the first hearing of their trial at the Court of First Instance in Muscat Governorate. Al-Keumy was charged with gathering and blocking the road which also directed against Al-Rajehy who also faces additional charge of insulting a civil servant. Both defenders have denied the charges against them and talked in court about all the violations they have suffered since their arrest and during the period of imprisonment. Defense lawyers have not been allowed to talk by the judge who also refused to release the accused defenders on bail. The judge adjourned the hearing to 27 June 2012.

The undersigned organizations call on the government of Oman to:

1. Bring an end to the practice of administrative detention against all human rights defenders and protect their right to peaceful protest and assembly;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Basma Al-Keumy, Basma Al-Rajehy and all other human rights defenders detained as a result of their legitimate human rights activities;
3. Grant Basma Al-Keumy and Basma Al-Rajehy immediate and unfettered access to their lawyers and families;

4. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Basma Al-Keumy and Basma Al-Rajehy while they remain in detention;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Oman are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

The petition is endorsed by the following:

1. Gulf Centre for Human Rights.
2. Nazra for Feminist Studies (Egypt).
3. Human Rights First Society (Saudi Arabia).
4. Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights (Egypt).
5. The Arabic Network For Human Rights Information (Egypt).
6. Bahrain Human Rights Society (Bahrain).
7. Arab Working Group for Media Monitoring.
8. Center for Middle Eastern Studies Rutgers University, New Brunswick (USA).
9. Cairo Center for Development (CCD) (Egypt).
10. Women Parliament.
11. Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT) (Egypt).
12. Iraqi Network For Social Media - I.N.S.M (Iraq).
13. European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH).
14. Doha Centre for Media Freedom (Qatar).
15. Bahrain Rehabilitation and Anti Violence Organization (BRAVO) (Bahrain).
16. Amman Center For Human Rights Studies (Jordan).
17. Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (Iraq).
18. The European-Bahraini Organisation for Human Rights (EBOHR) (Switzerland).
19. Gulf Civil Society Associations Forum.
20. Iraqi Al-Amal Organization (Iraq).
21. Iraqi Women Network (Iraq).
22. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).
23. Yemen Organization for Defending Rights and Democratic Freedoms (Yemen).
24. WLUMI (International Solidarity Network of Women Living Under Muslim Laws).
25. INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre (Sri Lanka).
26. Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID).
27. Femmes et Droits Humains (Mali).
28. WOREC (Women's Rehabilitation Centre) Nepal (Nepal).
29. Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice.
30. Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights.
31. Center for Women's Global Leadership (USA).
32. National Alliance of Women Human Right Defenders (Nepal).
33. Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (Bahrain).
34. Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (Bahrain).
35. NGOs platform of Saida (Lebanon).