

4 May 2016

## **Oman – Arrest and incommunicado detention of human rights defender Abdullah Habib**

4 May 2016 marks the twentieth day of the incommunicado detention of prominent Omani human rights defender Mr **Abdullah Habib**. On 15 April 2016, the human rights defender was arrested following a summons to report to the Omani Police General Command in Muscat for questioning. Since then, he was transferred to Muscat's intelligence offices and has been held incommunicado without access to his family and lawyer.

[Abdullah Habib](#) is a human rights defender, poet, writer, and film critic. He has been advocating for the respect of human rights in Oman through short films and publications, including on social media. He took part in peaceful pro-democracy protests in 2011 in the People's Square in front of Oman's parliament in Muscat, calling for the improved protection of human rights through government reform, particularly in relation to living conditions and the quality of life in Oman

On 15 April 2016, the Omani Internal Security Service (ISS) issued a summons against human rights defender Abdullah Habib to appear for questioning before the Special Division of the Omani Police General Command in Muscat. Upon arrival, he was immediately arrested and detained incommunicado in Muscat's intelligence offices. To date, no official reason has been given for Abdullah Habib's arrest, and he remains incommunicado without access to his family and lawyer. Prior to his arrest, the human rights defender suffered from poor health and it is feared that it may be deteriorating rapidly.

Several days before his arrest, Abdullah Habib was reported to have publicly expressed his support on social media for Hafiz Mohammad Shaker, an Omani boy with a German father, who faces deportation due to the discriminating Omani law which does not allow children to acquire Omani citizenship from their mother, only their father. In a separate publication, Abdullah Habib called on Oman's ruler, Sultan Qaboos bin Said al-Busaidi, to reveal where the rebels executed during the Dhofar Rebellion of the 60s and 70s, which resulted in the killing of more than ten thousands civilians and rebel fighters by the armed forces, were buried; *"The Omani government has a simple and moral obligation, which is to disclose the locations of the burial grounds of martyrs that were executed,"* he wrote.

Front Line Defenders believes that the arrest and detention of Abdullah Habib is related to his human rights activities and the legitimate exercise of his right to freedom of expression. Front Line Defenders is concerned for his physical and psychological integrity while in detention.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Oman to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender Abdullah Habib, as it is believed that he is being held solely as a result of his human rights activities;
2. Grant Abdullah Habib immediate and unfettered access to his family and lawyer;

3. Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Abdullah Habib in all circumstances and guarantee that his treatment while in detention adheres to international standards, particularly the '*Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment*' adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
4. 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.