

Oman: Prominent human rights defender Saed Jadad sentenced to three years in prison

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On 8 March 2015, the Court of First Instance in Muscat sentenced prominent human rights defender Saed Jadad to three years in prison on several different charges. The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) deplores the practise of jailing human rights defenders merely for exercising their rights to freedom of assembly and expression.

Jadad was sentenced to three years in prison and a fine of 500 Omani Rial (approx. UAD\$1300) after he was convicted on charges of “undermining the prestige of the state.” He was sentenced to a year in prison and a fine of 200 Omani Rial (approx. USD \$520) on charges of incitement to “illegal gathering “. Finally, he was sentenced to three years and a fine of 1000 Omani Rial (approx. USD\$2600) after being convicted of allegedly “using information networks to disseminate news that would prejudice public order.” The court decided to merge the three sentences and only implement the toughest punishment which is three years in prison with the payment of all fines, as well as placing bail at 2,000 Omani Rial (approx. USD\$5200) so he could be released on bail pending appeal. It is worth mentioning that Jadad remained silent for the duration of the trial and did not address the judge’s questions.

Reports confirm that he has not yet been released despite paying the bail amount as he faces another case before the Court of First Instance in Salalah on 17 March 2015 on charges of violating the Information Technology Act. He is still in jail inspite of his deteriorating health, and being held in solitary confinement at the notorious special division of the Omani police in Muscat.

Jadad is a long-standing, prominent human rights defender in Oman. He was instrumental in organising and leading pro-reform protests in Dhofar in 2011 and has spoken publicly to crowds of up to 20,000 people. He used to be an active blogger and has signed several petitions calling for reform in Oman.

For more information about his case please see GCHR’s earlier appeal of 22 February 2015:
<http://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/924>

The GCHR deplores in the strongest terms the sentences issued against Saed Jadad and calls on the Omani government to immediately cease the series of violations against him without restrictions or conditions.

The GCHR urges authorities in the Oman to:

1. Ensure the release of human rights defender Saed Jadad immediately and unconditionally;
2. Drop all the fabricated charges against him; and
3. Guarantee in all circumstances the ability of human rights defenders and journalists in Oman to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisal, and free of restrictions including judicial harassment.

The GCHR respectfully reminds the Omani authorities that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 6 (c): "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters;" and to Article 12.2, which provides that "the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration."

Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)

P.S.

* Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR). 2015-03-09:
<http://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/935>