

HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR



AMMAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES

**Weekly Press Monitoring of Human Rights News
in The Middle East and North Africa**

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THIS WEEK'S NEWS:

ACHRS | PAGE 02

- PAGE 3** **AFGHANISTAN**
Beginning of Taliban delegation in Oslo
ALGERIA
Opposition parties in danger of dissolution
- PAGE 4** **BAHRAIN**
Open Letter: immediate release of Abdul Jalil Al Singace
EGYPT
Deadline for legalising NGOs extended
- PAGE 5** **IRAN**
Iranian authorities send Iranian-French researcher back to prison.
IRAQ
Suspected ISIL fighters kill 11 Iraqi soldiers
- PAGE 6** **LEBANON**
Right to education at risk
- PAGE 7** **LIBYA**
Institutional crisis still far from being solved
PALESTINE
Palestinian family house demolished by Israeli police
- PAGE 8** **SAUDI ARABIA**
Saudi-led coalition denies carrying out strike killing civilians in Yemen
SUDAN
Investigation on Human rights violations in Sudan
- PAGE 9** **SYRIA**
Daesh terrorist group attacks
TUNISIA
Migrant boat sinks off Tunisian coast
- PAGE 10** **TURKEY**
Journalist jailed over quoting a proverb
- PAGE 11** **UAE**
3 killed in a drone attack in Abu Dhabi
YEMEN
At least 70 dead in Saudi-led airstrike on rebel-run prison

Beginning of Taliban delegation in Oslo

The Taliban delegation, led by Acting Foreign Minister Aamir Khan Muttaqi, began Sunday, January 23rd. The delegation consists of three days of talks in Oslo with western government officials and representatives of Afghan civil society. Taliban representatives will meet women's rights activists and human rights defenders from Afghanistan and the Afghan diaspora, behind closed-door meetings in the Norwegian capital.

Al Jazeera has learned that the delegation will be forced to deliver on its human rights commitments in exchange for billions of dollars in frozen humanitarian aid.

ALGERIA

Opposition parties in danger of dissolution

In early January, the secular political party 'Rally for Culture and Democracy' (RCD) was officially notified with a warning on behalf of the Ministry of Interior, demanding the interruption of their activities, labelled as "contrary to regulations". The formal notice came in response to the meeting of the 'Forces of the Democratic Alternative' (PAD), the opposition alliance, that took place on December 24th. PAD was established during 2019 in the context of the pro-democracy protests, or the Hirak movement, which sprung up after then-president Bouteflika announced his intention to run for office for the fifth time. Even if Bouteflika was replaced with the current president Tebboune, the Hirak movement persisted. Tebboune is considered to be just another facet of the establishment that has been running the country since its independence from France, in 1962. PAD champions democratic reforms and an independent judiciary, and it is constituted of seven liberal and progressive parties, including the Workers' Party (PT), the Socialist Workers' Party (PST), the Union for Change and Progress (UPC), the Democratic and Social Movement (MDS), the Party for Secularism and Democracy (PLD), and the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH).

Algerian law regulating political parties does not foresee the need for any authorisation for meetings so this warning is perceived as an assault of liberties and violation of the right to political pluralism on behalf of the opposition. Several actions against the opposition have already been carried out by the government. One example is the decision to dissolve the **Youth Action Rally**, which Amna Guellali, from Amnesty International, described as "an alarming indicator of [the government's] commitment to crack down on independent activism".

Louisa Hanoune, the Secretary of the Workers' Party, who spent nine months in prison in 2019 for "conspiring against the authority of the State", labelled these government proceeding as "a decisive step towards a complete authoritarian takeover of political life and the media by the government, to prevent any independent expression, with the aim of maintaining the status quo against the will of the majority of the people".

Open Letter: immediate release of Abdul Jalil AlSingace

On January 17th, the [International Federation for Human Rights](#) (FIDH) published an open letter, demanding the immediate and unconditional release of Dr Abduljalil AlSingace. The Bahraini academic, blogger, and human rights defender, was sentenced to a life sentence in response to his role and engagement during Bahrain's 2011 uprising. Since July 8, 2021, it has been reported that Dr Abduljalil was on a hunger strike, which alarmed FIDH. The organization also sheds light on AlSingace's health conditions, suffering from post-polio symptoms. His medical conditions worsened in Prison.

The open letter emphasizes the fundamental right to health, in this case regarding prisoners on hunger strike, as well as the right to adequate access to qualified health professionals prisons should have. Twenty-seven other co-signatories joined this open letter, such as Amnesty International, the European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ECDHR) and Democracy for the Arab World Now.

EGYPT

Deadline for legalising NGOs extended

In 2021, the Egyptian government established a new NGO rule. In doing so, NGOs had to change their ways of working, in order to be legalised again. Initially, the government granted one year for this reform. However, after a request from the Egyptian Human Rights Council (NHRC), the Cabinet gave permission for the extension.

With this action, the Cabinet reinforces the authorities' good response to the council's requests, as well as the state's increased openness to strengthening the role of NGOs and contributions in community service, as well as reform and development concerns, [Al-Ahram](#) and NHRC stated.

The new NGO has been legalised after heavy criticism of the previous one, which was issued by President Al Fattah, in 2017. It placed severe limits on the activities of the country's tens of thousands of non-governmental organizations. Now, 20,000 NGOs and civil society organizations are able to legalize their status, with just 31,000 NGOs out of 54,000 able to do so by the earlier deadline. In conclusion, the NCHR welcomes greatly this change in legislation.

Iranian authorities send Iranian-French researcher back to prison

On January 18, 2022, [Human Rights Watch](#) reported that the Iranian authorities reincarcerated Fariba Adelkah, a French-Iranian prominent academic, reported Farika Adelkah Support Committee, on January 12th. Adelkah was arrested in Iran on June 5, 2019. From December 2019 to February 2020, Fariba Adelkhah went on a 49-day hunger strike. She still faces strong consequences from this hunger strike. The academic had several charges held against her, such as 'propaganda against the political system of the Islamic Republic' and 'collusion with a view to undermining national security'. She was convicted for a six-year prison sentence.

In October 2020, Abdelkah was released from the Elvin Prison and put on house arrest with an electronic tag. The reason for her reincarceration is, claimed by the Iranian authorities, failure of compliance with the rules of her house arrest. The authorities didn't provide any additional details.

Human Rights Watch already documented other cases of Iranian dual nationals detained in Iran on some vaguely national security charges. Often, there is no convincing evidence for their charges. The NGO explained in their report that it is a way of putting pressure on western countries.

IRAQ

Suspected ISIL fighters kill 11 Iraqi soldiers

Suspected [ISIL gunmen attacked Iraqi military camps](#) in Diyala province, killing 11 soldiers in their sleep, Iraqi security officials reported.

The attack occurred early Friday in the mountainous al-Azim district, more than 120 kilometres north of the capital Baghdad, sources said. There was no immediate claim to responsibility for the attack and the circumstances of the attack were unclear. Two officials interviewed by The Associated Press said ISIL fighters broke in at 3 a.m. local time.

The officials did not want to be named, because they were not authorized to make official statements. Army reinforcements have been sent to the village where the attack took place, and security forces have been deployed in the surrounding area, the sources said. The attack was one of the deadliest against Iraqi forces in recent months.

Right to education at risk

With the ever-increasing economic crisis, public schools have almost all closed. Teachers have demanded an increase in their salaries in a public **demonstration**, in order to get by. The demonstration has been going on since January 10th.

The strike began as a response to the non-adjustment of public school teachers, while the worth of the Lebanese pound has decreased by almost 90%. Most teachers work at an hourly rate.

AlJazeera states that some teachers now earn as little as 1 dollar per hour. Next to the low salaries, the teachers are also striking because of the high gas prices. Carpooling to their job worked for a while, but is not sustainable.

Besides the closing of public schools, what also endangers a child's right to education, is the low number of available teachers. The state does not have the resources to hire more professionals, leading to a big work pressure for the teachers. On top of that, private schools have become unaffordable, leading to an increase in students at public schools. These combined make that the right to education is in danger.

The Minister of Education has requested support from humanitarian organizations such as UNICEF, to support schools with their COVID-19 public health measures and student services. With this help, NGOs assist disadvantaged families in keeping their children in school.



Image Source: **AlJazeera**, 2022

Institutional crisis still far from being solved

After the umpteenth postponement of the presidential elections, which were supposed to be held on the 24th of December, the situation in Libya remains highly unstable, as different actors promote different solutions to solve the current institutional deadlock.

The current Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah pushes for the adoption of a **new constitution**. He considers this to have priority, more than any election, as it would be the only effective tool to protect the nation and secure electoral processes as well. Dbeibah believes that the lack of a strong constitutional framework is the main cause for the failure of last month's election.

On the other hand, **Stephanie Williams**, the UN Advisor on Libya, stated during a meeting with Aqila Saleh, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, that the only way to legitimately overcome the current impasse is to hold free elections. Williams called on all parties involved in the country to "focus on the election process, transitional justice and national reconciliation". Williams' vision aligns with the one of **Antonio Gutierrez**, UN Secretary-General, who declared that "the choice of holding presidential or parliamentary elections first is in the hands of the Libyan people".

PALESTINE

Palestinian family house demolished by Israeli police

Israeli authorities destroyed a Palestinian house in Jerusalem on Wednesday, January 19th. The Salhiya family was under the threat of expulsion from 2017. It was the second time that the family was forced to move since they left their house in West Jerusalem at the creation of Israel, during the 1948 Palestinian exodus.

The demolition was condemned by **UNRWA** who stated "Israeli forces violently raided the house of the Palestine refugee family at 3 a.m. on January 19th, while members of the Salhiya family, including an elderly woman and a young child, were sleeping". Other NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, condemned the destruction of the house. Also Riyad al-Maliki, the Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister, in collaboration with France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, condemn the action in a common communiqué.

The Salhiya family used to live in Sheikh Jarrah, a neighbourhood from which many Palestinians were evicted last May. The expulsions and displacements of Palestinians highly contributed to the May 2021 outbreak of violence that led to the death of 256 Palestinians and 13 Israelis.

According to the **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**, 970 Palestinians, including 424 children, face a risk of displacement due to evictions in East Jerusalem.

Saudi-led coalition denies carrying out strike killing civilians in Yemen

On January 21st, the [Saudi-led coalition](#) hit a temporary detention centre in the province of Saada, in the North of the country. Al-Motawakel, Health Minister of the Houthi government, accused it to be a deliberate attack against civilians. Save the Children reported at least three kids being killed by the missiles, and a spokesperson from Doctors Without Borders (MSF) reported the death toll to be at least 70. 138 were wounded. Nevertheless, the Saudi-led coalition denies executing the strike.

Several aid agencies active in Yemen published a joint statement saying that they were "horrified by the news that more than 70 people, including migrants, women and children, have been killed in a blatant disregard for civilian lives". The Saada detention centre was employed as a holding centre for migrants, who made up for many of the deaths.

SUDAN

Investigation on Human rights violations in Sudan

After months of demonstrations and violence by the military authorities in Sudan. The United Nations Human Rights Office condemns the security forces' brutal treatment of peaceful protesters according to [VOA News](#).

On Monday, January 17th, the United Nations monitor said Sudanese security forces used live ammunition to break up a demonstration, killing seven people and injuring dozens. Under international law, the use of live ammunition is only permitted as a measure of last resort. Human rights defenders call for investigations of those responsible for such human rights violations.

Shamdasani, a human rights defender, also calls on the military authorities to answer for the violence against peaceful demonstrators. She also alleges that the VAO authorities justify their actions by claiming that they are trying to maintain public order.

According to the [Scoop World News](#), a fact-finding mission led by UN human rights expert Adama Dieng scheduled for January 22-27, 2022, was postponed at the request of the Sudanese authorities.

Daesh terrorist group attacks

Last Thursday, January 20th, a bomb exploded near a prison run by the YPG. The attack on the Ghwayran prison in Hassakeh province was initiated by Daesh members who attacked YPG forces with the aim of freeing members of the group, [Daily Sabah](#) reported. The attack killed 18 guards and at least 16 Daesh fighters, in clashes sparked by the attacks.

Ghwayran Prison houses many suspected terrorists in northeast Syria and Daesh supporters of more than 50 nationalities, one of the largest facilities housing Daesh fighters in northeast Syria, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Daesh operatives launched their attempt to free approximately 3,500 comrades imprisoned in Ghwayran prison, [Arab News](#) reported. The attack spread panic in Hasakah, forcing people to flee the area near Ghwayran prison.

TUNISIA

Migrant boat sinks off Tunisian coast

Eleven people died after a migrant boat sank off the coast of Tunisia on Wednesday, January 19th. Among the victims was a 10-year-old girl. The Tunisian National Guard affirms that there were 32 migrants on the boat. They were able to save 21 of the passengers. All migrants were Tunisians. The boat sank off the city of Sfax, the second-most populous city of Tunisia.

According to [UNHCR](#), in 2021, Tunisians represented 21.8% of the Mediterranean migrants, before Egyptians (11.5%), and Bangladeshi (10.9%). Furthermore, the UN agency estimates that 1,971 migrants were killed last year when trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea.



Image Source: [The Guardian](#), 2022

Journalist jailed over quoting a proverb

On January 22nd, a Turkish court ordered the **detention** of famous journalist Sedef Kebas over alleged insults to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The journalist was jailed ahead of trial with charges punishable by up to four years in prison.

Specifically, the detention was a consequence of Mrs Kebas' declaration on Tele 1, a channel with close ties to the opposition. Kebas is accused of targeting Erdogan due to a proverb she quoted: "A crowned head becomes wiser. But we see it is not true. A bull does not become king just by entering the palace, but the palace becomes a barn." Later, she also posted the proverb via Twitter.

The governmental response to Kebas' declaration was univocally severe: Fahrettin Altun, head of the national communication department, commented on the episode: "The honour of the presidency's office is the honour of our country. I condemn the vulgar insults made against our president and his office". Abdulhamit Jul, the Minister of Justice, also wrote on Twitter that the journalist would "get what she deserves for the unlawful worlds". Mrs Kebas has denied any intention of insulting the president in her court statement.

According to **Al Jazeera**, from 2014 onwards, the year in which Erdogan became president, 160.169 investigations have been undertaken for insulting the president. 35.507 cases were filed, out of which 12,881 convictions arose.



Image Source: **BBC**,

3 killed in a drone attack in Abu Dhabi

Last Sunday, 2 Indians and 1 Pakistani were killed and 6 were injured in drone attacks that resulted in the explosion of 3 fuel tankers.

The attack revindicated by Houthis, Yemeni rebels, was perceived as an answer to the Emirati contribution to the Saudi-led coalition in the Yemeni Civil War. It was the first Houthi attack led on Emirati soil and it could potentially put into question the image of a safe country in the Middle East, developed by UAE leaders. The attack revealed the failure of its multibillion-dollar air defence system. Although some drones were intercepted during the attacks, they were hardly detectable. Therefore, following the attack, UAE has banned the use of private drones for one month.

The attack was condemned by most [Gulf and Western countries](#), including the USA. President Biden affirmed considering re-designating Houthis as a terror group, although Biden himself removed the Yemeni rebels from the terror blacklist quickly after his election.

YEMEN

At least 70 dead in Saudi-led airstrike on rebel-run prison

Yemen's conflict suffered a dramatic escalation on Friday, January 21st, with an airstrike killing at least 70 people and wounding more than 200 people. The airstrike targeted a prison in Saada, northern Yemen, a region under the control of the Houthis. Another airstrike, earlier that day, hit a telecommunication centre in the port city of Hodeida and knocked out the country's internet.

Although Saudi Arabia denied being responsible for the airstrike in Saada, the Saudis arrived to Yemen just a few days after Houthis attacked the United Arab Emirates, Riyadh's key partner in the coalition. Indeed, the Saudi-led coalition affirmed being responsible for the attack in Hodeida that disrupted the country's internet. However, they did not confirm the attack on the detention centre.

Many NGOs condemned the airstrike, including [Save the Children](#), which affirmed that 3 children were killed in the attack on the telecommunication centre, while they were playing on a nearby football field. UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, condemned the airstrikes and affirmed that "attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, are prohibited by international humanitarian law."

The Yemeni Civil War has turned into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. About 130.000 people have been killed, including more than 12.000 civilians, with children making up a quarter of all civilian casualties.



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ABOUT ACHRS

ACHRS is an independent non-governmental Think Tank center advocating for the enhancement of democracy and human rights in Jordan and the MENA region. The Center's five priorities are the right to life, the right to speak, the right to think, the right to participate and women's rights.

ACHRS has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

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