

URGENT ACTION

HEALTH CONCERNS FOR DETAINED BRITISH NATIONAL

Luke Symons, a 29-year-old British national, arbitrarily detained by the Huthi de facto authorities for more than four years in Sanaa, Yemen, has been moved to solitary confinement. His health condition is deteriorating. He was detained on 4 April 2017 by the Huthis at a security checkpoint in Ta'iz, a city in southwestern Yemen, for what appears to be no more than possessing a British passport. To date, he has not been charged nor has he appeared before a judge. Amnesty International urges the Huthi de facto authorities to immediately release Luke Symons. Pending his release, they must ensure he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that he has legal representation, regular access to his family, and adequate medical care.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Ansarullah Spokesperson

Mohamed Abdelsalam

Email: mdabdalsalam@gmail.com

Twitter: @abdusalamsalah

Dear Mohamed Abdelsalam,

British national **Luke Symons**, arbitrarily detained by the Huthi de facto authorities since 4 April 2017 in Sanaa, Yemen, has been moved to solitary confinement. His health condition is deteriorating. He was arrested at a security checkpoint in Ta'iz, a city in southwestern Yemen, on the grounds that he possessed a UK passport. To date, Luke Symons has not been charged nor has he appeared before a judge.

According to two of his relatives Amnesty International spoke with, Luke Symons has been accused of espionage for the British government. However, he has not been formally charged to date. Additionally, Amnesty International examined a release order issued on 2 December 2018, by the Sana'a-based Supreme Political Council of Yemen, the executive body set up by the Huthis, demanding the release of Luke Symons for lack of evidence against him.

According to Luke Symons' family, he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated during interrogation, in a bid to make him "confess" to being a spy. As a result of beatings in 2018, his arm was broken. More recently, he has also suffered from a stomach problem and was denied access to medical care, despite his repeated requests.

During his last phone call with his family in December 2021, Luke Symons expressed that his detention conditions were having a detrimental impact on his physical and mental health. Also, his wife, who was able to visit him in early January 2022, expressed deep concern about his deteriorating physical and mental health.

He is currently held in solitary confinement in a prison in Sanaa, Yemen. Under International law, solitary confinement is prohibited for pre-trial detainees and can amount to torture for detainees suffering from mental distress.

We urge the Huthi de facto authorities to immediately release Luke Symons, unless he is charged with a recognizable criminal offence. Pending his release, they must ensure he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that he has legal representation, regular access to his family, and adequate medical care.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All parties to the conflict, including Huthi forces, the Yemeni government, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)-led coalition and UAE-backed Yemeni forces have carried out arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, harassment, torture and other ill-treatment, and unfair trials.

In areas they control, [Huthi forces arbitrarily arrested and detained critics](#) and opponents as well as journalists, human rights defenders and members of the Baha'i community, subjecting scores to unfair trials, [incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance](#). The majority of those targeted have been members or supporters of the political party, *al-Islah*.

In May 2021, Amnesty International published a report, '[Released and Exiled: Torture, unfair trials and forcible exile of Yemenis under Huthi rule](#)'- an in-depth investigation into the experiences of a minority of non-fighters, including journalists, political opponents and Baha'i religious minority members, who were released as part of political deals in 2020 after being unlawfully detained and tortured for up to seven years. Upon their release, the Baha'is were forced into exile, with the United Nations (UN) facilitating their departure; eight other detainees were banished to other parts of the country.

Conditions in Huthi-run prisons and detention centres, including mass overcrowding of detention cells, inadequate access to health care, sufficient food, clean water and sanitation, caused Covid-19 to spread, exposing detainees to substantial health risks. All parties failed to take measures to protect detainees and curb the spread of the virus in prisons and detention centers through the provision of masks or other hygiene products.

The internationally recognized Yemeni government has also harassed, threatened and arbitrarily detained human rights defenders and other activists. Meanwhile, UAE-backed Yemeni forces in southern Yemen [conducted a campaign of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances](#). In May 2018, Amnesty International detailed the cases of 51 men held in a network of secret prisons by UAE and Yemeni forces operating outside the command of Yemen's government, including individuals detained between March 2016 and May 2018.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic and English

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 12 APRIL 2022

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Luke Symons (He/him/his)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
Twitter handle: @FCDOGovUK

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