

Network of Concerned Historians					NCH
<b>Campaigns</b>					
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names	
2016		83	Oman	Abdullah Habib	

*Announcement*

Pen International reports today, 29 April 2016, that writer and film-maker Abdullah Habib has remained in incommunicado detention since 15 April 2016 in Muscat, the capital of Oman, probably in connection with a Facebook post (14 April 2016) he wrote calling for the Omani government to reveal the burial sites of rebels executed during the Dhofar rebellion (1962–1976). For full information, see below.

Please twitter, mail or write to the authorities immediately, preferably in your professional capacity.

#### **PEN INTERNATIONAL RAPID ACTION NETWORK**

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**29 April 2016**

**RAN 09/16**

#### **OMAN: prominent artist arrested and detained**

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**PEN International is deeply concerned at the arrest and detention of renowned Omani writer and intellectual Abdullah Habib. Habib, 52, was summoned to appear for questioning before the Special Division of the Omani Police General Command in Muscat on 15 April 2016. He was detained upon**

**arrival, and remained in incommunicado detention for over a week and is believed to remain without access to a lawyer of his choice. No official reason has been given for Habib's arrest, although it has been reported that it may be in connection with a Facebook post he wrote calling for the Omani government to reveal the burial sites of rebels killed during the Dhofar rebellion in the 1960s and 1970s. PEN International is concerned for Habib's wellbeing in detention following reports that he is in poor health.**

**TAKE ACTION! Share on Facebook, Twitter and other social media**

**Send Appeals:**

- Calling on the Omani authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Abdullah Habib if his arrest is in connection with views he has expressed which were peaceful and which did not incite hatred or violence;
- Ensure that while he is detained, he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and that he is in regular access to a lawyer of his choice and his family;
- Urging the Omani authorities to accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights without delay and reminding them that, in line with the UN's 1998 Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the government must provide protection to human rights defenders, including against any violence, threats, retaliation or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of the legitimate exercise of their rights.

**Addresses:**

**Minister of Justice**

Sheikh Abdul Malik al-Khalili  
Ministry of Justice  
PO Box 354  
RUWI PC 112  
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman  
E-mail: [info@moj.gov.om](mailto:info@moj.gov.om)

**Minister of the Interior**

His Excellency Hamoud bin Faisal bin Said Al Busaidi  
Ministry of Interior  
PO Box 127, Ruwi 112  
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman  
Salutation: Your Excellency

**And copies to:**

**Chairman, Oman Human Rights Commission**  
Dr 'Isa Bin Sa'id Sulayman  
al-Kiyumi  
Sultanate of Oman  
Fax: +968 24 2189 06

Suggested tweet:

@moj\_gov prove your commitment to #freedomofexpression in #Oman and release #AbdullahHabib!

It is recommended that you send a copy of your appeals via the diplomatic representative for Oman in your country. Contact details for embassies can be found [here](#)

***\*\*Please contact the PEN office in London if sending appeals after 29 May 2016\*\* Please keep us informed of any action you take in regard to Abdullah Habib's case, including any responses you receive from the authorities.***

## **PUBLICITY**

PEN members are encouraged to:

- Add your name to the Release Abdullah Habib Now petition by contacting the organisers [here](#)
- Publish articles and opinion pieces in your national or local press highlighting the situation about freedom of expression in Oman.
- Organise public events, stage readings, press conferences or demonstrations.
- Share information about Oman and your campaigning activities for Abdullah Habib via social media

## **Background**

Abdullah Habib is a prolific writer, film-maker and intellectual who has written extensively on film. He holds a PhD/ABD (2005) in Critical Film Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where he has taught courses in “Third World Cinema”, and “Cinema and Social Change”. A member of the founding committee of cinema in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), he has also directed several short films, including “The Statue” and “This is Not a Pipe”, for which he received the Abu Dhabi Cultural Association Award in 1992. Habib has also published twelve books of poetry and short story collections. In 2013, Habib was honoured by the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council for his excellence in cultural production.

On the evening of 15 April, the Omani Internal Security Service (ISS) summoned Habib to appear for investigation before the Special Division of the Omani Police General Command in Muscat. He has been held in detention there ever since, without access to his lawyer. Habib was granted access to his family earlier this week. According to PEN’s information, the authorities have yet to bring charges against him.

The authorities have not yet given a reason for his arrest, though it has been reported that it is likely related to a [post](#) Habib wrote on [Facebook](#) in which he called for the Omani government

to reveal the location of the bodies of rebels executed during the Dhofar Rebellion, an insurgency which took place in the south of Oman between 1962-1976.

In the post, Habib relates the story of the execution of two groups of rebels he calls “Group 72” and “Group 74”, highlighting the cruel treatment meted out to the victims. He points to the British involvement in suppressing the rebellion when he mentions [Tim Landon](#), a Brigadier in the British army at the time who was influential in engineering the coup which placed the current Sultan Qaboos on the throne. Habib ends the post by calling for the Omani government to “speak frankly and openly” about the location of rebels’ burial sites.

A close friend of Habib told PEN International of his concerns for Habib’s safety in detention due to his frail mental and physical health.

A [petition](#) drafted by Omani writers, and signed by many following its publication, passionately denounced the “shameless and contemptible violations of freedom of expression” faced by writers and activists in Oman.

This the first time that Habib has been arrested by the Oman authorities, despite having taking part in popular protests in 2011 against the housing situation in Oman.

PEN is also concerned by reports that Habib’s close friend, the writer, **Suleiman Al-Maamari**, was summoned by the Omani Secret Services on 28 April 2016 and has not been heard from since. PEN is currently seeking further information.

*For further information please contact Emma Wadsworth-Jones at PEN International, Koops Mill Mews, 162-164 Abbey Street, London, SE1 2AN, Tel. + 44 (0) 20 7405 0338, email: [emma.wadsworth-jones@pen-international.org](mailto:emma.wadsworth-jones@pen-international.org)*