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American Islamic Congress

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—American Islamic Congress Calls on Yemen to Drop Charges against Independent Journalist Abdulkarim al-Khaiwani

The American Islamic Congress today called on the Yemeni government to drop all charges against independent journalist Abdulkarim al-Khaiwani, who faces a sentencing hearing tomorrow that could result in the death penalty.

“Mr. al-Khaiwani is one of the most prominent independent reporters in Yemen and the Arab world,” said Nasser Weddady, the organization’s Civil Rights Director. “His newspaper has been closed, his website blocked, and his young children beaten. He is being persecuted solely for his investigative journalism.”

While Yemen has a vibrant independent media, the government has targeted outspoken editors like al-Khaiwani,

who has been repeatedly jailed and beaten over the past three years. The prosecution of independent journalists comes as the Yemeni government has allowed the USS Cole bombing masterminds to go free for months and repeatedly released suspects on the FBI's Most Wanted list.

"When terrorist masterminds walk free but investigative journalists get arrested, there is a serious threat to freedom of the press," Weddady explained. "The Yemeni government has been lax with terrorists and brutal with reporters. That is unacceptable."

The American Islamic Congress has joined an international partnership of human rights organizations, including several Yemeni press freedom groups, to launch a letter-writing campaign on al-Khaiwani's behalf. Already, over 750 people from around the world have sent letters to Yemeni, US, and European officials about al-Khaiwani's case.

"Al-Khaiwani and all of Yemen's journalists are entitled to practice their profession without fear of political retribution," said Weddady. "We hope the Yemeni government will drop all charges and target terrorists rather than journalists."

The American Islamic Congress is a civil-rights organization promoting tolerance and the exchange of ideas among Muslims and between other peoples. With the motto "passionate about moderation," the organization leads initiatives around the world and has offices in Washington, Boston, Egypt, and Iraq.