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PRESS RELEASE

Baha'i International Community

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Yemeni Baha'i receives death sentence as persecution escalates

NEW YORK – On 2 January 2018, the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a, Yemen, issued a ruling unprecedented in the persecution of the Baha'is in Yemen. Sentencing Mr. Hamed bin Haydara to death due to his religious beliefs, the judge furthermore called for the dissolution of all Baha'i Assemblies, thereby placing other Baha'i prisoners as well as the Baha'i community as a whole in imminent danger.

Following a protracted court case and a cruel four-year imprisonment, the final court hearing was held while the defendant, Mr. Haydara, was purposely prevented from attending. During the hearing, the local judge, Mr. Abdu Ismail Hassan Rajeh, called for the execution of Mr. Haydara and the confiscation of all of his assets, on the pretext that Mr. Haydara had been in communication with the Universal House of Justice, the highest governing body of the Baha'is, which is located in Israel. The verdict requires that the execution, the date of which is unknown, be carried out in public. The verdict also asks for the disbanding of Baha'i Assemblies, which mirrors acts of persecution committed in Iran against the Baha'is in the 1980s. An appeal to the court decision was immediately issued by the defense lawyer.

Bani Dugal, Principal Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations, commented, "This latest oppressive measure directed against Mr. Haydara and the Baha'is of Yemen as a whole is unprecedented and deeply alarming, especially so when one can clearly see the footprint of the Iranian government's persecution of the Baha'is here. We call upon the Houthi authorities to uphold justice and to overturn this unjust ruling and immediately release Mr. Haydara and all other Baha'i prisoners. We call upon the international community to speak out against this ruling and prevent further atrocities from taking place against the remaining Baha'i prisoners and the thousands of other Yemeni Baha'is."

Mr. Haydara was arbitrarily arrested at his workplace on 3 December 2013 and was held in custody in Sana'a, Yemen where, over the course of several months, he was subjected to repeated torture, forced to sign papers while blindfolded, and denied visitors, including his wife and daughters. Following his arrest, his home was also raided and his documents and

computer were confiscated by the National Security Bureau.

His first court hearing was held on 18 January 2015, over a year after he was arrested, and he was not allowed to be present. Furthermore, not until that time were formal yet [baseless and nonsensical](#) charges raised against him. Since then, over half of the nearly forty court hearings were cancelled under different pretenses, including the illness or unexplained absence of the judge. Over the course of his four years of imprisonment, Mr. Haydara has been repeatedly denied treatment for medical conditions that developed as a result of the torture he experienced. It is worth noting that no substantive evidence was presented during any of these court proceedings, a fact that was pointed out several times in the final hearings to the prosecution by the judge himself. This acknowledgement of the lack of evidence was followed, strangely and unexpectedly, by the summary judgment on 2 January 2018 to execute Mr. Haydara.

Blatant violations of basic human rights against the Baha'is in Yemen have been documented by the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), the [Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief](#), and the [Human Rights Council](#), as well as international organizations such as Amnesty International (e.g. regarding [wave of arrests in April 2017](#), and [calling for the release of Mr. Haydara](#)).

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