

# U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

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## Yemen

<b>Response to Information Request Number:</b>	YEM02002.OGC
<b>Date:</b>	September 13, 2002
<b>Subject:</b>	Yemen: Information on Human Rights Abuses by the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) in the Former South Yemen
<b>From:</b>	INS Resource Information Center
<b>Keywords:</b>	Yemen / Dissidents / Imprisoned persons / Opposition leaders / Political parties / Political prisoners / Political trials / Political violence

### Query:

Provide information on human rights abuses by the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) and its police, including whether these abuses were meant to repress political opposition.

### Response:

#### SUMMARY

The ruling Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) in the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), or South Yemen, killed, tortured, or imprisoned many political opponents in the decade before the country merged with North Yemen in May 1990, according to reports by the U.S. State Department and Amnesty International. Some of the worst abuses occurred in 1986, when thousands of people were killed and thousands more tortured amid an intra-party coup that ousted then President Ali Nasir Mohammad al-Hasani and brought to power President Haidar Abu Bakr al-Attas.

In most cases, the sources did not distinguish between police and other security services, referring to them generically as security forces.

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Following the 1986 coup, "human rights violations in the PDRY took place on an unprecedented scale," according to the U.S. State Department. "Thousands" of people were killed, including many suspected Ali Nasir supporters, the State Department said, with many reportedly executed arbitrarily. In addition, "there were many reports of torture in 1986, as well as reports of executions being carried out by barbarous methods," according to the State Department human rights report covering the events of 1986 (U.S. DOS 1987).

In the aftermath of the coup, hundreds of Ali-Nasir supporters, beyond those killed in the initial fighting, were massacred, the State Department report said. Prison guards reportedly machine-gunned to death nearly 100 inmates at a jail in al-Gar, Abyan Province, the report said (U.S. DOS 1987).

Amnesty International learned of eight extrajudicial killings in 1986, with the victims including journalists, judges, and a YSP official (AI 1987).

In addition to killing individual supporters of Ali Nasir, the new Al-Attas government also targeted civilians suspected of loyalty to the ousted president. South Yemenis who fled to North Yemen reported that security forces machine-gunned schools and other buildings filled with civilians from various tribes loyal to Ali Nasir, the State Department report said. Local security forces also fired on demonstrations in Abyan, resulting in many casualties, while security forces in Aden reportedly used machine gun fire to break up a protest by women in Aden, also with many casualties, the report added (U.S. DOS 1987).

Security forces also systematically tortured suspects in numerous detention centers, at least during the first few months of 1986, Amnesty International reported. Five journalists reportedly were tortured to death (AI 1987).

The new al-Attas government also arrested thousands of people. Many apparently were arrested solely because they came from provinces believed to be strongholds of support for the ousted President Ali Nasir, such as Aden, Abyan, and Shabwa provinces, according to Amnesty International. By 1987, officially more than 4,700 of those arrested were released under an amnesty declared in 1986 (AI 1987, 1988).

Following a series of show trials in 1987, the People's Court in Aden that December sentenced 35 people to death, including Ali Nasir and 18 others in absentia, according to press reports. The court also sentenced 84 people, including 19 in absentia, to prison terms of between five and 15 years, and pardoned, acquitted, or dismissed the charges against 18 others. Of those sentenced to death, 24 later had their sentences commuted to life in prison (U.S. DOS 1988).

While the human rights situation appeared to improve somewhat after the al-Attas regime consolidated its power, the government's overall human rights record remained dismal. In

its report for 1989— the year before the reunification of the North and South— the U.S. State Department criticized South Yemen for abusing prisoners and detainees, arbitrarily arresting suspects and holding them incommunicado, and jailing suspects without trials (U.S. DOS 1990). Similar charges were made in the State Department reports covering 1987 and 1988 (U.S. DOS 1988, 1989).

While it is difficult to determine the extent to which these abuses were politically motivated, Amnesty International noted that the government in 1989 arrested at least 31 suspected supporters of former President Ali Nasir in Aden and Shabwa Provinces. All but three were still being held without charge or trial at the end of that year. Those arrested included students, police, civil servants, and laborers (AI 1990).

The government reportedly also arrested more than 40 people on political grounds in 1988, possibly on suspicion of supporting former president Ali Nasir, Amnesty International reported. They included an ex-YSP official and government and private sector workers. Several apparently were released within a few months. Most of the arrests reportedly took place in al-Mukalla, Hadhramawt Province (AI 1989).

A newspaper based in North Yemen and linked to ousted President Ali Nasir charged the al-Attas government in 1988 and 1989 with "politically motivated killings" of several dozen military officers, government officials, and others. These reports could not be confirmed independently (U.S. DOS 1989, 1990).

Observers also reported many politically motivated human rights abuses under the regime of Ali Nasir, who took power in 1980. The U.S. State Department's human rights report for 1985 described the regime as being "tightly controlled by a ruthless police and security apparatus" (U.S. DOS 1986). It noted reports of disappearances of regime opponents and of torture by the State Security Organization and other security outfits. Refugees from South Yemen reported arrests of political dissidents, although these reports could not be confirmed (U.S. DOS 1986).

The State Department's report for 1984 described the regime's ruthlessness toward its internal enemies, noting that some officials who lost power struggles were placed under house arrest, forced into exile, or executed. "Assassinations for political reasons have been condoned or perpetrated by party and government leaders," the report said, adding that many opponents of the regime had disappeared (U.S. DOS 1985). It also said that "thousands" of political opponents had been jailed over the previous 15 years (U.S. DOS 1985). Reports from earlier years echoed these concerns (U.S. DOS 1981-1984).

Both the Ali Nasir and al-Attas governments targeted members of the pro-Iraq Ba'ath Party. In 1985, the Ali Nasir government jailed 11 Ba'ath Party members for treason. Amnesty International stated that these 11 party members may have been prisoners of conscience. The 11 were released in 1988 by the al-Attas government (AI 1989).

The al-Attas government reportedly executed two former Ba'ath Party officials in 1987 (U.S. DOS 1988).

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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