

2 January 2018, the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a, Yemen, sentenced a member of the Baha'i community, Mr Hamed bin Haydara, to be executed due to his religious beliefs. The judge furthermore ordered 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. This raises the persecution of the Baha'is in Yemen to an unprecedented scale.

Mr Haydara was arbitrarily arrested at his workplace on 3 December 2013 and was held in custody in Sana'a, Yemen until his first court hearing on 18 January 2015, over a year after he was arrested. He has now served a 4-year sentence, during which he has been subjected to extensive torture, been denied treatment for consequent medical conditions, forced to sign papers while blindfolded, and denied visitors including his wife and daughters.

The final court hearing 2 January 2018 was held while the defendant, Mr. Haydara, was purposely prevented from attending. The verdict requires that the execution, the date of which is unknown, be carried out in public. During the hearing, the local judge Mr Abdu Ismail Hassan Rajeh, called for the execution on the pretext that Mr Haydara had been in communication with the highest governing body of the Baha'is, which is located in Israel as a result of the successive banishments imposed on the Founder of the Baha'i Faith, by the Ottoman Empire.

Both the death sentence verdict and the call to dissolve all Baha'i Assemblies in Yemen comprise the latest acts in a series of waves of persecution that betray the clear intention of the authorities in Sana'a to eradicate the Baha'i community. These include the mass arrest of 60 participants at an educational gathering in August 2016, the call for arrests of over two dozen Baha'is in April 2017, and the ongoing imprisonment of, at this time, 7 Baha'is in Sana'a.

These developments mirror acts of persecution committed in Iran against the Baha'is in the 1980s. This is particularly alarming as a growing number of independent sources in Yemen have repeatedly confirmed that Iranian authorities are directing efforts to persecute the Baha'is in Yemen. Multiple reports further indicate that high-ranking authorities in the National Security Bureau are maintaining pressure on the Baha'i community as a result of instructions from Iran, despite repeated appeals by high-ranking Yemenis, including the Minister of Interior, the Attorney General, and tribal leaders, for the authorities to release the imprisoned Baha'is.

Ultimately, we hope that the Houthi authorities will repeal Mr. Haydara's court sentence and release all Baha'i prisoners. Mr Haydara's case is being raised at the UN level, but we have been advised on multiple occasions that the authorities in Yemen are particularly attentive to EU voices.