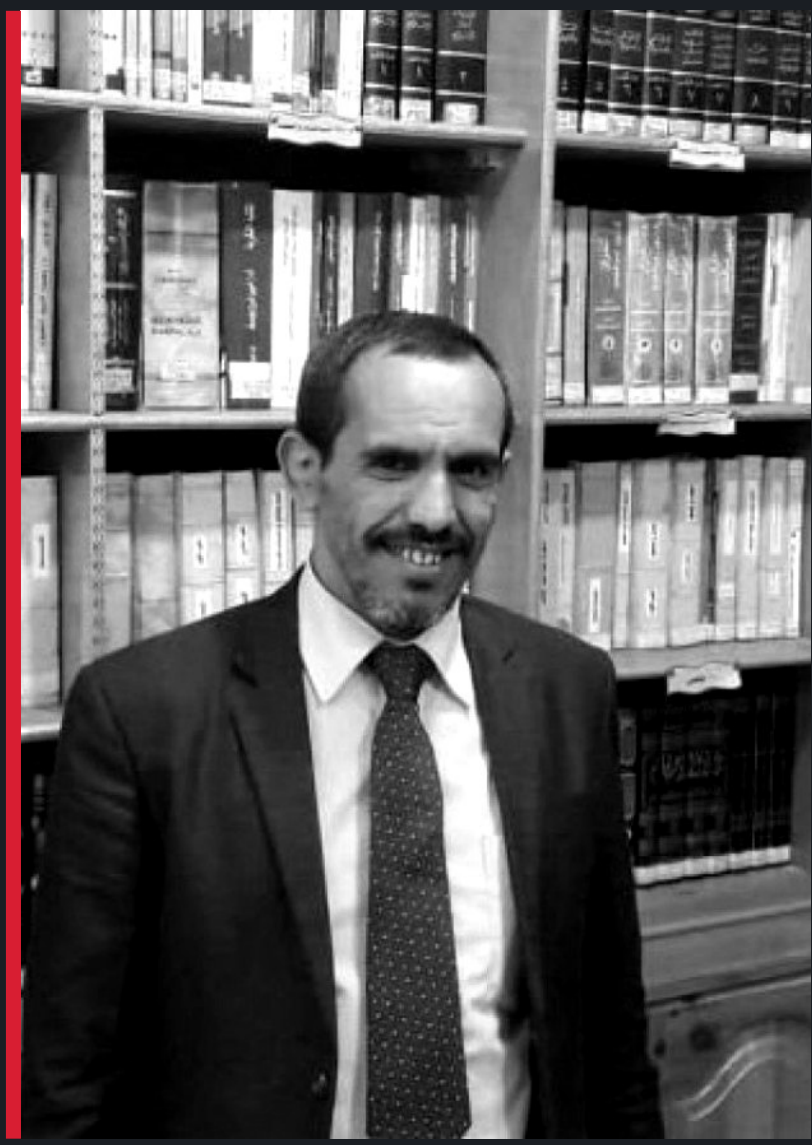

Advocacy dossier

Abdul Majid Sabra

عبد المجيد صبرة

Detained (pretrial) **Yemen**

Abdul Majid Sabra is a Yemeni lawyer who has defended journalists, political activists and others detained for exercising their rights. Huthi authorities have held him without charge in Sana'a since 25 September 2025; he went on hunger strike in December 2025 and June 2026, and in September 2026 Amnesty International called again for his release.

01

The case at a glance

Abdul Majid Sabra is a Yemeni lawyer who has defended journalists, political activists and others detained for exercising their rights. Huthi authorities have held him without charge in Sana'a since 25 September 2025; he went on hunger strike in December 2025 and June 2026, and in September 2026 Amnesty International called again for his release.

Status **Detained (pretrial)**	Arrested **25 Sep 2025**	Country **Yemen**
Charges Social media posts commemorating the anniversary of the 26 September Revolution		

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Abdul Majid Sabra immediately and unconditionally.

02 Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Arbitrary detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9

Criminalisation of solidarity International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 21, 22
UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 5

Denial of legal counsel International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14(3)

Enforced disappearance International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9, 16

Inhumane detention conditions International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10
UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)

Prolonged pretrial detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)

Threats and intimidation UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12

03

How the case unfolded

11 April 2020

Other act

Barred from verdict hearing of journalists he defended

As lawyer for the four journalists sentenced to death by the Huthi-run Specialised Criminal Court on 11 April 2020, Abdul Majid Sabra said the verdict was handed down with no defence lawyer present, and that a judge had barred the journalists' lawyers from the court since 27 January 2020. He said he would appeal.

25 September 2025

Arrest

Arrest at office in Sana'a

Armed Houthi forces and plainclothes operatives raided Abdul Majid Sabra's office in the Shamila district of Sana'a, presented an arrest warrant citing his social media posts about the 26 September Revolution anniversary, and took him to an undisclosed location.

25 September 2025

Start of enforced disappearance

Whereabouts unknown, family unable to reach him

His family had no information on his whereabouts for about ten days. In October 2025 he telephoned them from unidentified numbers and said he was held in isolation. Seventeen organisations, including Human Rights Watch, said on 15 October 2025 that his detention may amount to an enforced disappearance.

10 November 2025

Interrogation

Questioned by security service

He was interrogated by the Houthi Security and Intelligence Service. His brother said he accepted conditions for release, including pledges to stop his human rights work and his posts, but he was not freed.

7 December 2025

Hunger strike begins

Hunger strike begins

Abdul Majid Sabra began a hunger strike in protest against his incommunicado detention. He told his family by phone on 11 December 2025. He was then held in solitary confinement at the Houthi Police Intelligence and Counterterrorism Service facility in Sana'a.

17 December 2025

Context

UN experts raise his case

The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and other UN experts sent a joint communication to the Ansar Allah movement about his arbitrary arrest and detention. No reply was received within the 60-day confidentiality period.

21 January 2026

Reappearance in custody

Family visits him for the first time; his place of detention is known

25 January 2026

Transfer between places of detention

Moved to a Security and Intelligence Service prison

He was moved to a prison of the Huthi Security and Intelligence Service in the Shamlan suburb, north west of Sana'a. By then he had weekly family visits and had not been charged.

April 2026

Context

Amnesty calls for his release

Amnesty International called for his immediate release after seven months in detention without charge.

June 2026

Context

Brothers threatened with arrest in reprisal

Houthi security officers threatened to detain his brothers, and the family was intimidated at the entrance of the security service.

16 June 2026

Hunger strike begins

Begins a second, open-ended hunger strike

17 June 2026

Hunger strike ends

Ends the hunger strike after the security service agrees to raise his case

8 September 2026

Context

Still held without charge

He was still held without charge in a Security and Intelligence Service prison in Sana'a, nearly one year after his arrest.

24 September 2026

Context

Amnesty International: still held without charge after one year

Amnesty International said he remained arbitrarily detained at the Huthi-run Security and Intelligence detention centre in Chamlan, near Sana'a, and had not been formally charged. According to a relative, he had been questioned about his social media posts marking the 26 September Revolution and about his work as a human rights lawyer. Amnesty called for his immediate and unconditional release.

04

The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: Abdul Majid Sabra remains held without charge by the Huthi Security and Intelligence Service in Sana'a, more than 13 months after his arrest. On 24 September 2026 Amnesty International called again for his immediate and unconditional release; no release or referral to a court has been reported since.

Background and Work

Abdul Majid Sabra is a human rights lawyer based in Sana'a, Yemen. For years he has represented individuals detained by Houthi de facto authorities for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association. His clients have included journalists targeted for their reporting, political activists held for opposition activities, and others subjected to arbitrary detention in areas controlled by Ansar Allah forces.

He has used social media platforms to document cases, provide updates to families, and advocate publicly for due process and the release of those unlawfully held. His legal practice and online advocacy have made him a visible figure in Yemen's shrinking space for human rights defense.

The Arrest

On 25 September 2025, a group of armed Houthi forces and plainclothes operatives raided Abdul Majid Sabra's office in the Shamila area of Sana'a. They presented an arrest warrant and told those present that he was being detained because of social media posts he had published marking the anniversary of the 26 September Revolution, the 1962 uprising that established the Yemen Arab Republic. The men took him to an undisclosed location.

For about ten days after the arrest, his family received no information about his whereabouts. In October 2025 he telephoned them from unidentified numbers and said he was held in isolation. They were unable to communicate with him or confirm which authority was holding him. The period of enforced disappearance caused severe psychological distress to his relatives, who had no legal recourse to locate him.

Detention Conditions and Hunger Strike

On 11 December 2025, Abdul Majid Sabra was able to make a phone call to his family. He informed them that he had begun a hunger strike in protest against his arbitrary detention. At that time he was held in solitary confinement at the Houthi Police Intelligence and Counterterrorism Service facility in Sana'a. In January 2026 he was moved to a prison of the Security and Intelligence Service, and on 21 January 2026 his family was allowed to visit him for the first time. In June 2026 he went on hunger strike again for two days. As of 24 September 2026 he was still held without charge in a Security and Intelligence Service detention centre in Chamlan, near Sana'a, according to Amnesty International.

The conditions of his detention raise serious concerns about his physical and psychological wellbeing. Prolonged solitary confinement is recognised as a form of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, particularly when combined with the lack of access to legal counsel and the uncertainty surrounding any formal charges or judicial process.

Legal Proceedings

As of September 2026 he had not been charged, referred to the prosecution or brought before a court. His family has not been informed of any trial date or legal process. The arrest warrant cited his social media activity, but no legal basis under Yemeni or international law justifies detention for peaceful expression.

His detention appears to be directly linked to his human rights work and his exercise of freedom of expression, both of which are protected under international human rights law to which Yemen is a party.

International Response

Human rights organisations have condemned Abdul Majid Sabra's arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. The targeting of lawyers who defend individuals detained for exercising fundamental rights represents a particularly severe form of repression, eroding the rule of law and denying due process to entire communities. His case illustrates the systematic suppression of legal advocacy and freedom of expression in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/abdul-majid-sabra/

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