Dissident Journalist in Yemen Is Shot and Killed

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CAIRO — One of [Yemen](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/yemen/index.html?inline=nyt-geo)’s best-known dissident journalists, who survived beatings and imprisonment under the former authoritarian government, was shot and killed on Wednesday by unidentified gunmen outside his home in the capital, Sana, according to witnesses and officials.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the shooting, which a witness said was carried out by two men on a motorcycle. The victim, Abdulkarim al-Khaiwani, was hit by at least seven bullets, according to a Yemeni security official.

Mr. Khaiwani was a longtime supporter of the Houthi rebel movement, which seized the capital last year, setting off one of the worst political crises in [Yemen](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/yemen/index.html?inline=nyt-geo)’s recent history.

For years, Mr. Khaiwani wrote about the Houthi rebellion against the central government, drawing the ire of officials in Sana. More recently, he acted as a spokesman for the group and served on a senior leadership committee, representing the Houthis’ most liberal wing.

In a statement after the shooting, Amnesty International said that, “given the history of intimidation and harassment Abdulkarim al-Khaiwani faced for his outspoken journalism and peaceful activism, his despicable killing today smacks of a politically motivated assassination.”

Similar killings have been an ominous hallmark of Yemen’s civil crisis over the last seven months, one that has split the country in half but has not descended into all-out armed conflict. The Houthis, a Zaydi Shiite movement, control the capital and large parts of northern Yemen. President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who was confined to his house by the Houthis in January, fled to the southern part of the country last month, seeking to re-establish his authority in the port city of Aden.

The details of the shooting on Wednesday eerily recalled the assassination in November of Muhamed Abd al-Malik al-Mutawakel, another political activist who was seen as a moderate voice in Yemen’s charged politics. Mr. Mutawakel was also gunned down by men who fled on a motorcycle.

The death of Mr. Khaiwani added to the growing list of leftist and liberal activists who have been killed across the Arab world, from Tunis to Damascus, over the last four years — women and men silenced by a violent regional order increasingly dominated by militia fighters, Islamist extremists and vindictive state security forces.

Mr. Khaiwani was one of the few journalists in Yemen to shine a light on the government’s brutal war against the Houthis in northern Saada Province, publishing accounts and photographs on his website in defiance of official attempts to hide the fighting from public view.

In [an interview with The New York Times in 2008](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/20/world/middleeast/20blogger.html), he said he was working on behalf of the people in Saada, who “wanted to show a real image of what is happening in the war there.”