

Yemeni journalist gets five years for Al Qaida link

Shaea refused to appeal and said he did not recognise the court

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Sana'a: A Yemeni journalist was sentenced on Tuesday to five years in prison for links with Al Qaida.

The journalist Abdul Elah Haidar Shaea got five years and his colleague Abdul Kareem Al Shami was sentenced to two years in prison. The duo was convicted of forming an armed gang to work with the Yemen-based branch of the terror network called Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Shaea refused to appeal and said he did not recognise the court. He also refused to allow lawyers to defend him.

"I'm not before a court now to appeal. I'm only in front of a gang who kidnapped me," Shaea told the Judge, Redhwan Al Namer, after he read the verdict in the State Security Court.

Earlier the prosecutor accused Shaea of using journalism as a cover to form an armed gang for carrying out terrorist acts in Yemen. He was also accused of recruiting people from outside Yemen to work with Al Qaida and providing them with information about the security offices and instigating them to attack.

"I want the judge first to order the arrest of those who kidnapped me and kept me in custody for 35 days," Shaea would always say whenever the judge asked him to comment.

The journalist appeared in good health as he waved to tens of journalists, friends and relatives who attended the session on Tuesday. Shaea looked confident unlike his friend Abdul Kareem Al Shami, who was accused of helping Shaea in sending and coding decoding emails.

Shaea was arrested on August 16 last year in Sana'a by the intelligence unit.

Without any access to family or lawyers, he was kept in the intelligence prisons until he was referred to the prosecution on September 22 when the court agreed to a request from the prosecution for keeping him in prison 30 days more for completing investigations.

Shaea became famous after he interviewed a top AQAP leader Nasser Al Wahaishi Abu Baseer in January 2009. Same year in November, he interviewed the Yemeni-American extremist cleric Anwar Al Awlaki, who is now wanted for the CIA dead or alive.

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