

Yemeni Human Rights Activist Detained At UK Border Under Terrorism Law

By [Reprive](#)

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A leading Yemeni human rights activist has been detained at Gatwick and questioned on his work and political views by UK officials under the Terrorism Act.

[Baraa Shiban](#), a member of Yemen's National Dialogue – the body tasked with mapping out the country's democratic future – had been invited to speak at a seminar at respected international think-tank [Chatham House](#) (also known as the Royal Institution of International Affairs).

He was detained under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act – recently used to controversial effect in the detention of [David Miranda](#) – last night (23 September), and questioned about his views on human rights abuses in Yemen.

When he informed the border agent that he did not think his views on the issue were relevant to security, Mr Shibaan was threatened with being detained for the full nine hours available under the law.

Mr Shibaan also works for legal charity Reprive as project coordinator in Yemen, and visited the UK without being detained earlier this summer. In May this year, he gave testimony to a US Congressional hearing on the impact of the covert drone programme in Yemen.

During his questioning, Mr Shibaan was also told that “Your organization has obviously been causing a lot of problems to your country. The relations between your government and the UK are vital for us.” Reprive works to support the relatives of civilian victims of drone strikes who are seeking legal redress. The organisation has recently found evidence showing that the UK supports the US' programme of covert drone strikes through the provision of communications infrastructure and intelligence.

Mr Shibaan was also asked why he was working for a human rights organisation, and told: “What if your organization did something bad to your government, and you are here because of the bad things your organization has done to your government...I want to know, because the relations between Yemen and the UK are important. I want to know that your organization is not disrupting that.”

Commenting after his release, Baraa Shiban said: “I was stunned when the border agent said I was being held simply because I came from Yemen. It was even more shocking when he spent the entire time asking me about my human rights work and Reprive, the charity I work for. Is the UK the kind of place that human rights activists are fair game for detention, intimidation, and interrogation?”

Cori Crider, Strategic Director at Reprieve, said: “This is part of a worsening campaign of intimidation of human rights workers going on at the UK border – especially if they are critical of the so-called ‘war on terror’. If there were any doubt the UK were abusing its counter-terrorism powers to silence critics, this ends it.”

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Mr Shiban is speaking to [Chatham House’s Yemen Forum tomorrow](#) (25 September).

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