

PUBLIC

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Fear of forcible return to Libya / Fear for Safety 23 April 1998

SAUDI ARABIA Al-Sayyid Mohammad Shabou, aged 33
Manal Hussein, (f), aged 30, wife of above
Mohammad Shabou, aged 5 } sons of above
Ahmad Shabou, aged 4 }

Amnesty International has just learned that the above-named Libyan family, who were granted refugee status in the United Kingdom in November 1997, have been arrested in Saudi Arabia and may be at imminent risk of forcible return to Libya. Were this to happen they would be at risk of serious human rights violations. It is not known where they are currently detained.

The family travelled to Saudi Arabia using United Nations travel documents between 21 and 23 January 1998. They were reportedly arrested by Saudi security forces, together with other Libyan nationals, after overstaying a two-week visa period in order to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Concern for the safety of this family is heightened by the fact that on 22 April, Arab Ministers of the Interior and Justice signed an agreement against "terrorism", which, among other things, encourages the extradition of Islamist activists to their country of origin.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Over the last few years Saudi Arabia has forcibly returned dozens of people to a number of countries, including Libya and Egypt. In 1993 two Libyans, Saleh al-Shalwi and Nuri al-jibani, were reportedly forcibly returned by Saudi Arabia to Libya via Egypt. They are believed to be held in Abu-Salim Prison in Tripoli. In 1996 Saudi Arabia returned at least six Egyptian nationals to Egypt, where they were allegedly tortured after arriving.

Amnesty International opposes the forcible return of people to countries where they risk imprisonment as prisoners of conscience, torture, disappearance, or execution. Amnesty International's work is based on the internationally-recognized Principle of Non-Refoulement which, as expressed in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, prohibits the forcible return of any person to a country where she or he risks serious human rights violations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English, French or in your own language:

- asking for clarification as to the legal status of Al-Sayyid Mohammad Shabou, his wife Manal Hussein and their two children, who were recently arrested in Saudi Arabia; asking also the reason for their detention and details of any charges brought against them;
- requesting that the family are not forcibly returned to Libya, where they may face serious human rights abuses, in accordance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

APPEALS TO:

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines
His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul-'Aziz
Office of H.M. The King
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Interior

His Royal Highness
Prince Naif bin 'Abdul-'Aziz
Ministry of the Interior
PO Box 2833
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 404416
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness
Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Nasseriya Street, Riyadh 11124
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Minister Foreign Affairs, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 405000
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency
Dr. Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Ministry of Justice
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Minister Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 405 980 MINJUS SJ
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 June 1998.