

# URGENT ACTION

## STUDENT ACTIVIST HELD, RISKS TORTURE

**A student human rights activist has been detained incommunicado since 3 March, putting him at risk of torture. If he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and association, Amnesty International would consider him to be a prisoner of conscience.**

Student Thamer Abdulkareem al-Kather was arrested by agents of the internal security agency, the General Intelligence, in the province of Qassim, north of the capital, Riyadh. He is detained at the General Intelligence Prison in Riyadh. He appears to have been arrested for his peaceful activities in calling for constitutional reform, and as an attempt to intimidate his father who is a member of a Saudi human rights organization.

His father, Dr Abdulkareem Youssef al-Khather, is professor of comparative jurisprudence at the Faculty of Islamic Jurisprudence at Qassim University, and a member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), which was established in October 2009 and is not officially recognised. A week before Thamer Abdulkareem al-Kather's arrest, both he and his father were followed by unmarked cars, believed to belong to security agents: at times these cars were parked outside their house and in their private parking spots. Thamer Abdulkareem al-Kather's brother was also stopped at gunpoint and searched a day before his arrest.

A day after Thamer Abdulkareem al-Kather was arrested; General Intelligence agents brought him to his house and demanded to search it. When his father asked to see a search warrant, they refused to produce one but said they had official authorization. The agents searched the house and confiscated his computer and other personal belongings.

It is not known whether Thamer Abdulkareem al-Kather has been charged. However, ACPRA believes he may have been detained because of his activities in circulating petitions in Qassim. These petitions included one issued in May 2009 by 77 activists, some of whom would later set up ACPRA, who condemned trials of terrorism-related suspects before secret tribunals, and called for fair public trials. He also circulated an ACPRA petition in January 2010 which called on the government to set up a fact-finding committee to investigate human rights abuses by the Ministry of Interior.

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English or your own language:

- calling on the Saudi Arabian authorities to release immediately and unconditionally Thamer Abdulkareem al-Kather, if he is being held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and association;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Thamer Abdulkareem al-Kather is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and given regular access to his family, lawyer and any medical attention he may require.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 APRIL 2010 TO:

#### King and Prime Minister

His Majesty King 'Abdullah Bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud  
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques  
Office of His Majesty the King  
Royal Court, Riyadh  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior)**

**+966 1 403 1185 (please keep trying)**

**Salutation: Your Majesty**

#### Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud, Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road  
Riyadh 11134  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Fax: +966 1 403 1185 (please keep trying)**

**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

#### **And copies to:**

President, Human Rights Commission  
Bandar Mohammed 'Abdullah al- Aiban  
Human Rights Commission  
P.O. Box 58889, King Fahad Road,  
Building No. 373, Riyadh 11515  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Fax: +966 1 461 2061**

**Email: [hrc@haq-ksa.org](mailto:hrc@haq-ksa.org)**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Critics of the Saudi Arabian government face gross human rights violations at the hands of branches of the security forces under the control of the Ministry of Interior. They are often held incommunicado without charge, denied access to lawyers and the courts to challenge the lawfulness of their detention, and tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Legal proceedings fall far short of international standards for fair trial: defendants are generally denied legal counsel, and in many cases they and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Court hearings are often held behind closed doors.

In the name of counter-terrorism, the Saudi Arabian authorities have arrested thousands and detained them without charge, including government critics. At least seven men arrested in February 2007 are still held without charge, in Dhahban prison near Jeddah. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience detained for their peaceful advocacy of political change and their human rights activities. They were targeted by the authorities after they circulated a petition calling for political reform, and discussed a proposal to establish an independent human rights organization in Saudi Arabia. They had also challenged the impunity enjoyed by Ministry of Interior officials who arrest and detain people outside the framework of the law. The Ministry of Interior claimed in a statement that the men had been arrested because they were collecting money to support terrorism; the men deny this. For more information see Further Information on UA 312/08 (MDE 23/017/2009, 8 June 2009).

Incommunicado detention and solitary confinement are routine practices in Saudi Arabia. Both are used, along with torture and other ill-treatment, to extract confessions from detainees, to punish them for refusing to “repent”, or to force them to make undertakings not to criticize the government. Incommunicado detention in Saudi Arabia often lasts until a confession is obtained, which can take months and occasionally years.

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