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Kuwait: Release journalist Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem

In a letter addressed to the Amir, Amnesty International has called on the Kuwaiti authorities to release journalist and blogger Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem and to drop charges brought against him on account of his legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression.

Amnesty International made this call as Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem is due to appear before a Criminal Court in Kuwait City on 7 June.

Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem was sentenced to six months' imprisonment on 1 April 2010 after being convicted on criminal defamation charges brought on the basis of remarks he was alleged to have made in February 2010 in which he questioned the competence of Kuwait's prime minister and called for him to resign.

Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem remained free on bail after being sentenced on 1 April and the following day wrote in an article that he would not allow it to deter him from continuing to express his opinions. On 10 May, however, he handed himself in to State Security officials after he was informed that an arrest warrant was being issued against him and he was then placed under a 21-day administrative detention order. He was not allowed access to his family for more than two weeks, interrogated without the presence of his lawyer and subjected to humiliating treatment. He was then taken before a criminal court in Kuwait City on 24 May, blindfolded and with his hand and feet shackled, and was not allowed to confer with his lawyer. He was further charged with harming national interests and undermining the status of the Amir of Kuwait. He now faces a further court appearance on 7 June.

Amnesty International has also asked the Kuwaiti authorities to clarify the legal grounds on which Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem is currently being held, as the 21-day detention order issued against him expired on 31 May.

Amnesty International has also asked the government about reports that it has instructed the media in Kuwait not to report or comment on Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem's case and the reason and legal grounds for such restrictions, which would appear to breach Kuwait's obligations as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to uphold the right to freedom of expression.

Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem was previously arrested on 22 November 2009 and detained for 12 days.

Amnesty International considers that Muhammad Abd al-Qader al-Jasem is a prisoner of conscience, held solely on account of his legitimate exercise of his right to freedom of expression, and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Public Document

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