

# URGENT ACTION

## REFORMISTS KEPT IN PRISON

**Six reformist prisoners of conscience have been kept behind bars, while 10 others, several of whom were out on bail, are now released under a “pardon” on condition that they give up their activism.**

Ten men were released under a royal “pardon” in January, but only if they signed a pledge not to repeat their offences or engage in public activism, and thanked the King. Six others held with them and not released are prisoners of conscience: **Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi, Dr Saud al-Hashimi, Dr Musa al-Qirni, Abdul Rahman al-Shumayri, Abdul Rahman Khan and Abdullah al-Rifa’i**. At least two of these men are understood to have been offered the same conditional release but rejected it.

Former judge Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi, aged 76, was rearrested on 12 December 2012, two days after he had given a lecture at an informal social gathering on the lawfulness under Shari’a of holding demonstrations. He was held incommunicado, in solitary confinement, until 16 February. He has since been allowed visits from his family and is no longer in solitary confinement. Dr Saud al-Hashimi’s mother is very ill, and he has asked repeatedly to be allowed to visit her, but has been refused.

Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi and Dr Saud al-Hashimi had been among nine men detained in February 2007 in the cities of Jeddah and Medina after they circulated a petition calling for political reform and discussed a proposal to establish an independent human rights organization in Saudi Arabia. Seven other men connected to Dr Saud al-Hashimi were later arrested. Dr al-Rashudi was released on bail on 23 June 2011. On 22 November 2011, the 16 men were convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from five to 30 years followed by travel bans.

### **Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:**

- Urging the authorities to quash the convictions of the six men - Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi, Dr Saud al-Hashimi, Dr Musa al-Qirni, Abdul Rahman al-Shumayri, Abdul Rahman Khan and Abdullah al-Rifa’i - and release them immediately and unconditionally as they are prisoners of conscience, jailed solely for their peaceful activism;
- Calling on them, in the meantime, to allow Dr Saud al-Hashimi to visit his sick mother;
- Urging the authorities to quash the convictions of those among the 10 released who were held solely for peacefully expressing their rights to freedom of expression and association and to withdraw the restrictions on political activism and arbitrary conditions imposed on them as a condition of their release.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 05 JUNE 2013 TO:**

#### King and Prime Minister

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 3125 (please keep trying)  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

#### Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed  
bin 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 3125 (please keep  
trying)  
**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

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

#### Minister of Justice

Sheikh Dr Mohammed bin Abdul Kareem  
Al-Issa  
Ministry of Justice  
University Street, Riyadh 11137  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 1 401 1741 / +966 1 402 0311  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**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**



# URGENT ACTION

## REFORMISTS KEPT IN PRISON

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 16 men were sentenced on 22 November 2011 to between five and 30 years' imprisonment by the Specialized Criminal Court, which had been set up to deal with terrorism-related offences. They were convicted of charges such as "forming a secret organization", "attempting to seize power", "incitement against the King", "financing terrorism", and money laundering. Trial proceedings in their cases were grossly unfair. Lawyers and families were denied details of the charges against the men for months and were also denied access to many of the court proceedings.

Dr Suliaman al-Rushudi was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, to be followed by a 15-year travel ban, on charges including "participating in forming an organization called *Tawasso'* in order to spread chaos under the cover of advice and reform". *Tawasso'* means the human rights organization some of the men had planned to set up. Dr Suliaman al-Rushudi remained at liberty pending his appeal, but was rearrested on 12 December 2012, two days after he had given a lecture in an informal social gathering on the lawfulness under Shari'a of holding demonstrations. A video of his lecture was posted on YouTube and Twitter on 11 December.

Dr Saud al-Hashimi received the most severe sentence, 30 years' imprisonment followed by a 30-year travel ban. In late 2010 he is believed to have been tortured for going on hunger strike for over a week; he was stripped to his underwear, shackled and dragged from his cell, put in an extremely cold cell for about five hours, and forced to sign a "confession". Dr Saud al-Hashimi was later accused of "belonging to al-Qa'ida inside the country, promoting and calling for it and for other terrorist organizations and activities targeting this country". His lawyer argued that Dr Saud al-Hashimi had been on record expressing anti-al-Qa'ida views and played a role in seeking to convince others not to go to Iraq to fight. As for allegations around financing terrorism in Iraq, the lawyer noted that Dr Saud had helped to raise money on TV channels that were free to operate in Saudi Arabia and were meant to help the Iraqi people, not terrorists, and that this was done with official permission and in collaboration with a UK charity, Help the Needy.

The 16 men were the subject of UA 27/07 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/007/2007/en>). An update was issued after Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi was rearrested (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/mde23/004/2013>).

In Saudi Arabia criticism of the state is not generally tolerated. Those who do criticize the government, their policies or practices, are often held incommunicado without charge, sometimes in solitary confinement, denied access to lawyers or the courts to challenge the lawfulness of their detention. Torture or other ill-treatment is frequently used to extract "confessions" from detainees, to punish them for refusing to "repent", or to force them to undertake not to criticize the government. Incommunicado detention often lasts until a "confession" is obtained, which can take months and occasionally years. If a person is charged, it is sometimes with vague security-related offences such as "disobeying the ruler". 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.

For more information on violations of freedom of expression in the name of security see the report *Saudi Arabia: Repression in the name of security* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/016/2011/en>).

Names: Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi, Dr Saud al-Hashimi, Dr Musa al-Qirni, Abdul Rahman al-Shumayri, Abdul Rahman Khan, Abdullah al-Rifa'i  
Gender m/f: All male.

UA: 107/13 Index: MDE 23/014/2013 Issue Date: 24 April 2013