

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 23/08/96

EXTRA 111/96

Fear of torture / Possible prisoners of conscience 19 July 1996

SAUDI ARABIA Abdullah Abbas al-Ahmad, aged 40, employee of Aramco  
Kamil Abbas al-Ahmad, aged 25, university student  
Muhammad Ibrahim al-Ibrahim, aged 40, employee of Aramco  
Nasser 'Ali Rahim, 39, employee of Aramco  
Ali Hassan al-Dawood, 32, employee of Aramco  
and others

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The five men named above are among dozens of people who have reportedly been arrested during the first half of July 1996 and have since been held in incommunicado detention without charge. Amnesty International fears that the detainees, some or all of whom may be prisoners of conscience, are at risk of torture.

The exact reasons for the arrests are not known to Amnesty International, but they are believed to be part of a wave of detentions carried out by the General Intelligence in al-Qatif, Sayhat, Turaif, al-Jarudy and al-Awamiya following the bombing of the King Abdul Aziz air base in al-Khobar on 25 June 1996 in which 19 US nationals were killed. Those targeted for arrest are said to be mainly suspected political or religious opponents of the government from the Shi'a community and Sunni Muslims, followers of the Wahabi doctrine. They include religious scholars, students, and employees of Aramco, the Saudi Arabian national oil company.

The arrests were carried out without warrant, and the detainees' relatives were not informed of the reasons for their arrest. For example, Abdullah Abbas al-Ahmad was reportedly arrested at 6am on 9 July, as he was leaving his house to go to work, and was taken into detention after his house was searched. He is currently believed to be detained in the General Intelligence building in Damman. The other detainees are also believed to be held there.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Political and religious suspects in Saudi Arabia are, as a rule, subjected to arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention, and long-term detention without charge or trial. They are frequently tortured in order to extract information from them about political opposition activity. Hundreds of political suspects are currently held, most of them without charge or trial, some for about two years. Political trials are rare in Saudi Arabia, but when they do take place they invariably fall far short of international standards for fair trial. In some cases, defendants have been sentenced to death and executed after such trials (for example, see EXTRA 80/96 (MDE 23/04/96, 28 May 1996 and updates).

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

- seeking clarification of the reasons for the detention of the above individuals, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release unless they are to be promptly charged with recognizably criminal offences and given fair trials in accordance with international standards;
- seeking assurances that all detainees will be treated humanely, and urging that they be given immediate access to family, lawyers and medical care if necessary.

**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 the 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 of 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 of 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 20 August 1996.