

# URGENT ACTION

## SAUDI ARABIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST SENTENCED

**Saudi Arabian activist Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady has apparently been sentenced to four years' imprisonment followed by a travel ban. He is a prisoner of conscience detained in part for his human rights activism.**



Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady  
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Amnesty International has received credible information that on 10 April the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh, which was set up to deal with terrorism and security-related cases, sentenced **Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady** to four years' imprisonment followed by a five-year travel ban. He was reportedly found guilty of participating in the establishment of a human rights organization, harming the image of the state through the media, calling on the families of political detainees to protest and hold sit-ins, contesting the independence of the judiciary and having banned books in his possession.

Throughout his detention his legal defence team have been refused access to him and have been told that their right to represent him is not recognized by the Court. They were not allowed to attend hearings, which began in August 2011, despite standing outside the court for hours. The trial hearing in which he was sentenced was reportedly attended by soldiers in military uniforms, as well as a representative of the governmental Human Rights Commission. However, neither his family nor his legal representatives were made aware of the session.

Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady was arrested the day after he went to a protest outside the Interior Ministry in Riyadh on 20 March 2011. He is a co-founder of the human rights NGO Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA). According to information received by Amnesty International, he began a hunger strike on 11 March 2012 in protest against his detention and was refusing to take water from 7 April, giving rise to fears for his health. An Interior Ministry spokesman told news agencies on 10 April that Mohammed al-Bajady was not on hunger strike and that he was in good health. His legal defence team have asked to be allowed to visit him to verify this information, but it is believed they have been denied access. He is being held in Riyadh's al-Ha'ir prison.

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

- Calling on the Saudi Arabian authorities to overturn Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady's conviction and immediately and unconditionally release him as he is a prisoner of conscience being held solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Urging them to provide him with immediate and regular access to a lawyer of his choice and any medical attention he may require until his release.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 MAY 2012 TO:

King of Saudi Arabia  
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 3125 (please keep trying)  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

Second Deputy Prime Minister and  
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 3125 (please keep  
trying)  
**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

**And copies to:**  
Minister of Justice  
His Excellency Shaikh Dr Mohammed  
bin Abdul kareem Al-Issa  
Ministry of Justice  
University Street  
Riyadh 11137  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 1 401 1741

### Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 91/11. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/009/2012/en>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Saudi Arabian authorities have generally not tolerated protests taking place. Those who try to organize protests or take part in them are often arrested, held incommunicado without charge and denied access to the courts to challenge the lawfulness of their detention. Likewise critics of the government 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 are frequently used 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 often lasts until a “confession” is obtained, which can take months and occasionally years.

Following the protests in February 2011 onwards by the minority Shi’a Muslim community in the Eastern Province (see UA 61/11, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/009/2012/en>) and amid reports that further protests calling for reform by others in Saudi Arabia were planned, the Ministry of Interior issued a statement on 5 March 2011 confirming the ban on demonstrations. According to the statement, security forces would take “all necessary measures” against those who attempt to disrupt order.

Sporadic protests have continued, spurred in some cases by grievances about the prolonged detention without charge of relatives or about discrimination against the Shi’a minority, particularly in the east of the country, and in others by a desire for political reform. In most cases, they have been repressed quickly and those arrested have often been pressured into pledging not to come out onto the streets again, before being released or held incommunicado for prolonged periods. In some cases they are alleged to have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated. The repression of protesters comes against a backdrop of continuing repression of human rights activists, political dissidents and critics of the authorities, a number of whom have been detained and, in some cases, tried and imprisoned. While they are often accused, and convicted, of security-related offences, in courts set up to deal with security and terrorism-related offences, the acts which they are alleged to have committed generally appear to involve merely the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady attended one of these protests on 20 March 2011, the day before his arrest, outside the offices of the Ministry of Interior in Riyadh. He had tweeted messages on Twitter about the protest beforehand. The protest, which was said to have lasted for a few hours, was reported to have been attended by scores of people. They were calling for the release of their male relatives, who have been detained for years without charge. A number of those at the protest were arrested, including some of the women. The women were said to have been released after they were made to fingerprint statements confirming that they had attended the protest. The men who were arrested at the protest are believed to be still detained. Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady has been arrested twice in recent years. In 2007 he was arrested and detained, apparently in connection with his human rights activities.

Amnesty International detailed the crackdown on freedom of expression and protests in the name of security in a recent report entitled *Saudi Arabia: Repression in the name of security* issued on 1 December 2011 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/saudi-arabia-protesters-and-reformists-targeted-name-security-2011-12-01>).

Name: Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady (previously referred to as Mohammad Salih al-Bajadi)  
Gender m/f: M

Further information on UA: 91/11 Index: MDE 23/010/2012 Issue Date: 17 April 2012