

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP CO-FOUNDERS ON TRIAL

Two co-founders of a Saudi Arabian human rights organization are on trial on charges related to their human rights activism and criticism of the Saudi Arabian authorities. If imprisoned, Amnesty International will consider them to be prisoners of conscience.

Dr Abdullah bin Hamid bin Ali al-Hamid, 65 years old, and **Mohammad bin Fahad bin Muflih al-Qahtani**, 46 years old, both co-founders of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), a human rights NGO, had a trial session on 1 September where they both responded to the charges against them.

Dr Abdullah al-Hamid went on trial on 11 June and Mohammed al-Qahtani went on trial on 18 June, both appearing before Riyadh's Criminal Court and charged with a similar list of offences. The charges against them included seeking to disrupt security and inciting disorder, undermining national unity, breaking allegiance to the ruler, disobeying the ruler, and questioning the integrity of officials. According to their charge sheets, they were accused of carrying out the charges against them through, amongst other activities, drafting and publishing a statement calling for protests, setting up an unlicensed organization, understood to be ACPRA, and accusing the judiciary of allowing torture and accepting confessions made under duress. Mohammad al-Qahtani was one of several human rights activists present as observers at the trial hearing on 11 June when he was only then informed that he was to be brought to trial a week later.

Dr Abdullah al-Hamid is a well-known advocate of reform and has been detained in the past. He served a four-month prison sentence for "incitement to protest" starting on 8 March 2008, while his brother Issa al-Hamid, convicted on the same charge, served a six-month sentence. They had supported a peaceful demonstration outside the prison in Buraida by women calling for the release or fair trial of relatives detained without charge or trial. Dr Abdullah al-Hamid was sentenced in May 2005 to seven years' imprisonment on charges that included "sowing dissent and disobeying the ruler" after he and others were arrested for calling for political reform in 2004. He and others were released after a royal pardon was granted on 8 August 2005 by the then new King Abdullah.

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

- Urging the authorities to drop the case against Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Mohammed al-Qahtani as it appears to be based solely on their legitimate work to defend human rights in Saudi Arabia and their criticism of the authorities;
- Urging the authorities to quash all charges related to the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly; if they are detained on such charges, Amnesty International would consider them to be prisoners of conscience and call for their immediate and unconditional release.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 OCTOBER 2012 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
Prince Ahmed 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
Shaykh 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 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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Saudi Arabian authorities have recently targeted a number of human rights defenders, both through the courts and through arbitrary measures such as the imposition of travel bans. They have included members, including founders, of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), which was set up in October 2009. ACPRA has reported on human rights violations and helped many families of detainees held without charge or trial to bring cases against the Ministry of Interior before the Board of Grievances, an administrative court with jurisdiction to consider complaints against the state and its public services.

For instance, on 10 April 2012 the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh, which was set up to deal with terrorism and security-related cases, sentenced Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady, a co-founder of ACPRA, to four years' imprisonment followed by a five-year travel ban. He was reportedly convicted on charges relating to 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. See UA 91/11 *Further information: Saudi Arabian human rights activist sentenced: Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady* (Index: MDE 23/010/2012) at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/010/2012>

Other activists under threat include 57-year-old human rights defender and writer Mikhlif bin Daham al-Shammari, who faces a litany of charges, including trying to harm the reputation of the Kingdom in international media, communicating with suspect organizations and accusing state organs of corruption. Mikhlif is well known for his critical writings about human rights violations and corruption. He was released in February 2012 on bail, after more than a year and a half in detention for an article he published criticizing what he said was prejudice by Sunni religious scholars against members of the Shi'a minority and their beliefs. In April 2012 the authorities informed him he was banned from leaving the country for 10 years. His trial which began on 7 March 2012 is taking place in the Specialized Criminal Court.

Another human rights activist, 33-year-old Waleed Abu al-Khair, is still fighting a case against him for disrespecting the judiciary and harming the reputation of the Kingdom by giving an international organization false information about his wife Samar Badawi. His trial before the Criminal Court in Jeddah began in September 2011. He also had a travel ban imposed on him in March 2012, just days before he planned to attend a democracy course at a US university. Amnesty International has previously said the ban was unjustified and called for it to be lifted immediately.

Fadhel Maki al-Manasif, a 26-year-old human rights activist, is being tried by the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh for charges which include, among others, "breaking allegiance to the ruler", "stirring sedition and disorder", "inciting public opinion against the state", "disrupting order by participating in marches" and "supporting a person who is wanted by the State". The charges relate to events that took place in March 2009. However, Amnesty International believes that his arrests in 2011 and his trial may have been prompted by his human rights activism. See UA 304/11, *Further information: Saudi human rights activist facing trial: Fadhel Maki al-Manasif* (Index: MDE 23/008/2012) at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/008/2012>

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* (Index: MDE 23/016/2011), issued on 1 December 2011 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/016/2011/en>). See also the press release on the recent crackdown on activists, *Saudi Arabia ramps up clampdown on human rights activists*, issued on 18 June 2012 at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/saudi-arabia-ramps-clampdown-human-rights-activists-2012-06-18>

Name: Mohammad bin Fahad bin Muflih al-Qahtani (m), Dr Abdullah bin Hamid bin Ali al-Hamid (m), Issa al-Hamid (m), Mohammed Saleh al-Bajady (m), Mikhlif bin Daham al-Shammari (m), Waleed Abu al-Khair (m), Samar Badawi (f), Fadhel Maki al-Manasif (m).

Gender m/f: Both

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