

URGENT ACTION

WALEED ABU AL-KHAIR JAILED FOR 15 YEARS

Saudi Arabian human rights activist Waleed Abu al-Khair has been sentenced to 15 years in prison followed by a 15-year travel ban. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Human rights defender and lawyer **Waleed Abu al-Khair** was sentenced on 6 July to 15 years in prison, a 15-year travel ban and a fine of 200,000 Saudi Arabian riyals (about US\$53,000). The Specialized Criminal Court had found him guilty of “disobeying the ruler and seeking to remove his legitimacy”, “insulting the judiciary and questioning the integrity of judges”, “setting up an unlicensed organization”, “harming the reputation of the state by communicating with international organizations” and “preparing, storing and sending information that harms public order”.

Waleed Abu al-Khair’s trial started on 6 October 2013 before the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh. He was detained without any explanation on 15 April 2014 after appearing at the fifth hearing of his trial. He was initially taken to al-Ha’ir prison in Riyadh, where it is believed that he was placed in solitary confinement and deprived of sleep by constant exposure to bright lights. He was later moved to several detention centres and is now detained in Briman prison in the coastal city of Jeddah.

Waleed Abu al-Khair first faced trial in late 2011 after signing a statement criticizing the authorities’ persecution of 16 reformists. On 29 October 2013 he was sentenced to three months’ imprisonment by the Criminal Court in Jeddah and on 6 February 2014 the Court of Appeal in Mecca upheld his sentence.

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

- Urging the authorities to release Waleed Abu al-Khair immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Urging them to ensure that Waleed Abu al-Khair’s conviction and sentence are quashed;
- Calling on them to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 AUGUST 2014 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 11 403 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 11 403 3125 (keep trying)
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

And copies to:

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin
Abdulkareem Al-Issa
Ministry of Justice
University Street, Riyadh 11137
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 401 1741
+966 11 402 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. This is the first update of UA 98/14. Further information:
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/009/2014/en

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Waleed Abu al-Khair is a prominent human rights lawyer and the head of an independent human rights organization founded in 2008, Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia. He has provided legal representation to many victims of human rights violations. Among his clients is Raif Badawi, a well-known Saudi Arabian online activist who was sentenced on 7 May 2014 by the Criminal Court in Jeddah to 10 years in prison, 1,000 lashes and a fine of 1 million Saudi Arabian riyals (about US\$266,630) for creating and managing the Saudi Arabian Liberals website and insulting Islam (see update to UA 3/13, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/012/2014/en>).

Scores of other human rights defenders and civil society activists have borne the brunt of the authorities' clampdown over recent months. They include members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), an organization set up in October 2009 that has reported on human rights violations and helped many families of detainees held without charge to bring cases against the Ministry of Interior.

Two ACPRA co-founders, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani, were sentenced on 9 March 2013 to 10 and 11 years' imprisonment respectively, to be followed by travel bans of equal duration. They had been convicted of a list of offences, among them "breaking allegiance to and disobeying the ruler", "questioning the integrity of officials", "seeking to disrupt security and inciting disorder by calling for demonstrations", "disseminating false information to foreign groups", "violating Article 6 of the information technology law" and "forming an unlicensed organization" (understood to be ACPRA) (see UA 257/12, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/010/2013/en>). The court also ordered the disbanding of ACPRA, confiscation of its property and the closure of its social media accounts.

Dr Abdullah al-Hamid's brother Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid, himself a founding member of ACPRA, was arrested on 17 April 2014 by the Criminal Investigation Department in Buraydah, in the province of al-Qassim. He was held incommunicado for a month before being moved to Buraydah prison, where he is still detained without charge (see UA 102/14, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/010/2014/en>).

A fourth founding member of ACPRA, Fowzan al-Harbi, was sentenced on 25 June to seven years in prison and a travel ban of equal duration by the Criminal Court in Riyadh. His trial started on 4 December 2013 and he was arbitrarily detained on 26 December. Al-Harbi was convicted of several "offences", including "breaking allegiance" with the ruler by calling for protests, criticizing the authorities and participating in the founding of an "unlicensed organization" (understood to be ACPRA)." He was released on 23 June, two days before his conviction but only after the judge insisted that he sign a pledge not to publish anything on social media or socialize with other people until the sentence is considered final after the appeal (see news story, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/saudi-arabia-must-stop-prosecuting-human-rights-activists-spurious-charges-2014-06-25>).

Fadhel Maki al-Manasif was sentenced by the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh on 17 April to 15 years' imprisonment, to be followed by a 15-year travel ban, and a fine of 100,000 Saudi riyals (about US\$26,600). The charges are related to his activism and his reporting and documentation of discrimination against the Shi'a Muslim population in Saudi Arabia. He said he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated in detention (See UA 304/11, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/008/2014/en>).

Name: Waleed Abu al-Khair
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 98/14 Index: MDE 23/016/2014 Issue Date: 8 July 2014