

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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ON THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ACPRA, NGOS JOINTLY CALL ON SAUDI AUTHORITIES TO RELEASE ALL DETAINED MEMBERS

On October 12, 2019, which marks the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Saudi Association for Civil and Political Rights (ACPRA), the undersigned organizations call on Saudi authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all detained ACPRA members.

Created in 2009 by 11 human rights defenders and academics, ACPRA was established to promote and protect fundamental rights and freedoms in Saudi Arabia. While ACPRA was never legally recognised by the government, it was formally banned as an organisation in 2013. As of May 2016, all of its 11 members had been prosecuted and subjected to severe treatment by Saudi authorities for their human rights activism and cooperation with the United Nations human rights mechanisms. Yet, Saudi Arabia has been a member of the UN Human Rights Council for a total of 12 years.

As part of its mission, ACPRA advocated peacefully for a constitutional monarchy, a universally elected parliament, an independent judiciary, and for the protection of fair trial rights in Saudi Arabia. ACPRA has documented cases of human rights violations and communicated them to the relevant UN Special Procedures. Additionally, a number of ACPRA's members had been mentioned in the UN Secretary General's yearly report on Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights.

The 11 co-founding members of ACPRA are: **Essa Al-Hamid** (sentenced to 11 years in prison, followed by an 11-year travel ban); **Dr Abdulrahman Al-Hamid** (sentenced to 9 years in prison, followed by a 9-year travel ban); **Dr Abdullah Al-Hamid** (sentenced to 11 years in prison and an 11-year travel ban); **Dr Abdulkarim Al-Khoder** (sentenced to 10 years in prison, followed by a 10-year travel ban); **Omar Al-Said** (sentenced to 7 years in prison and a 10-year travel ban); **Mohammed Al-Bajadi** (sentenced to 4 years in prison, 4 years of suspension and a 10-year travel ban, and currently detained since May 2018 as part of a crackdown on women's rights defenders); **Sheikh Sulaiman Al-Rashudi** (sentenced to 15 years in prison and a 15-year travel ban); **Dr Mohammad Al-Qahtani** (sentenced to 10 years in prison and a 10-year travel ban); **Saleh Al-Ashwan** (sentenced to 5 years in prison followed by a 5-year travel ban); **Fowzan Al-Harbi** (sentenced to 10 years in prison and a 10-year travel ban); and **Abdulaziz Al-Shubaili** (sentenced to 8 years in prison and an 8-year travel and social media ban).

The prosecuted ACPRA members were sentenced to lengthy prison sentences ranging from 5 to 15 years by the Specialised Criminal Court (SCC), which was set up in 2008 to try acts of terrorism but has instead been used to prosecute human rights defenders and other peaceful activists. These ACPRA members all faced vaguely defined charges such as "insulting the judiciary," "calling to break allegiance with the ruler," "accusing the judiciary of being unable to deliver justice," "communicating with international organisations in order to harm the image of the State," and "forming or joining an illegal organisation," in reprisals for having peacefully advocated for constitutional reform and the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms in Saudi Arabia.

THE UNDERSIGNED HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS URGE THE AUTHORITIES OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA TO:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders without charges or reservations;
2. Allow ACPRA and other NGOs to continue to carry out their work supporting families of detainees and promoting human rights in their country;
3. Allow ACPRA to register, in order to enable its members to continue their peaceful and legitimate activities in the defense of human rights; and
4. Guarantee, under all circumstances, that all human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and without restrictions.

SIGNATORIES:

ACAT-France

ADHRB

Amnesty International

ALQST

Article 19

CIVICUS

FIDH, under the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Front Line Defenders

GCHR

Human Rights Watch

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

MENA Rights Group

Right Livelihood Foundation (Abdullah Al Hamid and Mohammad Al Qahtani are among the 2018 Right Livelihood Award Laureates)

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), under the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders