

URGENT ACTION

SUDANESE ACTIVIST ARRESTED, RISKS DEPORTATION

Sudanese national Waleed Al Hussein has been detained without charge in Saudi Arabia since 23 July, after a website he had set up criticized the Sudanese government. He is at risk of being deported to Sudan, where he could face torture and other ill-treatment. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Sudanese national **Waleed Al Dood Al Makki Al Hussein** was arrested on 23 July in the city of al-Khobar in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. He had set up the Sudanese news website *Al Rakoba*, which reports on political, social and economic issues, including government corruption.

According to his family, seven officers from the General Directorate of Investigations (GDI or al-Mabahith), one woman, five men in civilian clothing and one man in uniform, came into Waleed Al Hussein's home at about 3.30pm. They showed no warrant, but searched the house and took the family's laptop and tablet computers and mobile phones, as well as Waleed Al Hussein's passport. They arrested him and took him first to the GDI office in al-Khobar and later to the GDI prison in Dammam.

Waleed Al Hussein is now held without charge in solitary confinement in Dammam prison, where he has been interrogated about his criticism of the Sudanese government and his involvement in *Al Rakoba*. According to a relative, his interrogators told him he had been arrested at the request of the Sudanese authorities. He has been allowed one 10-minute visit from a family member, and two very short phone calls, and has been denied access to his lawyer.

Waleed Al Hussein learned in early September that orders for his deportation were being signed and that he could be returned to Sudan, where he would be at risk of imprisonment and torture.

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

- Urging the Saudi Arabian authorities to ensure that Waleed Al Hussein is not deported to Sudan, where he would be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment;
- Calling on them to release him immediately and unconditionally, as he is believed to be detained solely for legitimately exercising his right to freedom of expression and for expressing his conscientiously held beliefs;
- Calling on them to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and is granted regular access to his family and lawyer.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 OCTOBER 2015 TO:

Minister of Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed
bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Minister of Interior
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134 Kingdom of
Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 403 3125 (please keep
trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr Walid bin Mohammed
bin Saleh Al-Samaani
Ministry of Justice
University Street,
PO Box 7775, Riyadh 11137
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 401 1741 / 402 031

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

President of Sudan
HE Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir
Office of the President
People's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum
Sudan

Email: info@sudan.gov.sd

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

Waleed Al Hussein has lived in Saudi Arabia since 2000 because, according to a relative, as a prominent activist and vocal critic of the country's government, he was prevented from getting work in Sudan.

Waleed Al Hussein set up an online forum for political debate in Sudan in 2000, while in Saudi Arabia. He set up *Al Rakoba* in 2005, and it is now one of the most popular Sudanese news websites. It mainly publishes Sudanese political news, from various sources including the Sudanese government, as well as articles on social and economic issues in the country. Many of the articles are critical of government policy, and include some that have been censored in Sudanese newspapers by the government's security services.

Since he moved to Saudi Arabia, Waleed Al Hussein has visited Sudan only once, in 2008, to sign his marriage certificate; however, he was unable to attend his own wedding ceremony as he was forced to leave the country early for fear of arrest.

During Sudan's 2010 and 2015 general elections, *Al Rakoba* was particularly critical of the government, documenting and publishing information on corruption in the electoral system and government. Since then, Waleed Al Hussein and his family have received direct threats in anonymous posts on the website's comments sections.

Waleed Al Hussein is married with three children, aged six years, three years and three weeks old. The couple's third child was born while he was in custody. Despite his wife's requests to the prison authorities, Waleed Al Hussein was prevented from attending the birth and his wife has been unable to register the birth and acquire identity documents for the new baby without him present.

Since the end of Sudan's April 2015 general elections, Amnesty International has received numerous reports that a crackdown by the National Intelligence Security Service (NISS) on activities of political opposition groups and civil society has intensified. A court in the capital, Khartoum, tried and convicted three members of the opposition Sudanese Congress Party (SCP) on 6 July, including SCP political secretary Mastour Ahmed Mohamed, under Article 69 of Sudan's 1991 Criminal Act on "the Disturbance of Public Peace". They received 20 lashes each for speaking at a public event. In the month of August alone, more than a dozen political activists were arrested; seven more have been detained since the beginning of September. The NISS maintains broad powers of arrest and detention under the National Security Act 2010, which allows suspects to be detained for up to four-and-a-half months without judicial review. NISS officials often use these powers to arbitrarily arrest and detain people. Torture and other ill-treatment of individuals in NISS custody is widely reported.

Name: Waleed Al Hussein
Gender m/f: m

UA: 193/15 Index: MDE 23/2416/2015 Issue Date: 9 September 2015