

URGENT ACTION

PROTESTING HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST IMPRISONED

Saudi Arabian human rights activist Fadhel al-Manasif has been sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, to be followed by a 15-year travel ban. He is a prisoner of conscience.

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 travel ban of 15 years, and a fine of 100,000 Saudi riyals (about US\$26,600). The court convicted him of charges including "breaking allegiance to the ruler", "stirring sedition and sectarian division between citizens by inciting protests and marches", "communicating with foreign media to harm the Kingdom's government, its people and national unity" and "founding a banned association". He is appealing the decision.

The charges are related to his participation in peaceful protests in the country's Eastern Province which called for political reform and an end to discrimination against Saudi Arabia's Shi'a Muslim community, his reporting and documentation of such discrimination and him being a founding member of a banned human rights association. Fadhel al-Manasif has been detained since 2 October 2011 and was brought to trial before the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh on 28 February 2012. He remains at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Fadhel al-Manasif was previously detained from May to August 2011. He was held incommunicado and said he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated by security forces including the Ministry of Interior's General Directorate of Investigations (GDI).

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Fadhel Maki al-Manasif immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Asking them to ensure he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and given immediate and regular access to his family and lawyer;
- Asking them to ensure that an independent and impartial investigation is held promptly into the allegations of torture and that all those responsible are brought to justice in fair trials.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 5 JUNE 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 Justice

His Excellency Sheikh Dr 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

And copies to:

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 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 304/11. Further information:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/008/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Fadhel Maki al-Manasif was arrested in March 2009, apparently for being at a protest the same month in the Eastern Province, and was released after he signed a pledge not to take part in future protests. He was subsequently arrested on 1 May 2011 following another protest in the Eastern Province. He was released on 22 August 2011, again after signing a pledge that he would not take part in any future protest. He was not allowed a visit by a lawyer or his family during his detention. See UA 180/11, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/012/2011/en> and update, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/022/2011/en>.

On 2 October 2011, police at a checkpoint between the towns of Awwamiya and Safwa in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province rearrested Fadhel al-Manasif and took him to the police station in Safwa. He had tried, earlier that day, to calm a crowd protesting against the detention of two elderly men they believed were held to pressure their sons to surrender to the authorities, and had negotiated their release with the police. He was then transferred to Dhahran police station and detained in solitary confinement, without access to the outside world, for eight days, after which he was transferred to the GDI prison in Dammam. He was not allowed to receive visits from his family and only allowed to call them twice a month until 11 November 2012, when he was finally granted the right to a visit from them.

During both periods of detention, he said he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated by interrogators in different detention centres. The reported torture included being punched, kicked, blindfolded and made to stand for hours while handcuffed and shackled from the ceiling, as well as being given electric shocks. He also said he was insulted in relation to his religious beliefs and practices. See UA 304/11, 13 October 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/026/2011/en>.

On 28 February 2012 he was brought to trial before the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh, a special court set up to deal with terrorism and security-related crimes. He was charged in relation to events in 2009 with offences including "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". See update on UA 304/11, 5 April 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/008/2012/en>.

He was brought before the same court in July 2013 to face similar charges in a second case, this time in relation to events in 2011. The charges included "breaking allegiance to the ruler", "attacking the country's security and stability", "stirring sedition and sectarian rift between citizens by inciting on protests and marches", "communicating with foreign media to harm the Kingdom's government, its people and national unity" and "founding a banned association".

Name: Fadhel Maki al-Manasif
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 304/11 Index: MDE 23/008/2014 Issue Date: 24 April 2014