

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 23/045/2008

11 November 2008

UA 312/08 Fear of torture and other ill-treatment

SAUDI ARABIA **Suliman al-Rushudi, retired judge,**
Dr Saud al-Hashimi, medical doctor,
Al-Sharif Saif Al-Ghalib,
Dr Musa al-Qirni, university professor,
Dr ‘Abdel Rahman al-Shumayri, university professor,
Fahd al-Qirshi,
‘Abdel Rahman Khan,
‘Abdelaziz al-Khariji,
Dr Matrouk al-Faleh, university professor and human rights activist

Dozens of human rights activists in Saudi Arabia participated in a hunger strike on 06 and 07 November to protest against the detention and solitary confinement of the nine men named above, who are detained without charge or trial.

The men are prisoners of conscience detained for their advocacy of peaceful political change and the protection and promotion of human rights, and are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

All of those named above, except for Dr Matrouk al-Faleh, were arrested in the cities of Jeddah and Madinah on 03 February 2007 and are held in Dhahban prison in western Saudi Arabia.

These eight men were targeted because they had issued a petition calling for political reform and discussed the idea of establishing a human rights organization and challenging the impunity enjoyed by the Ministry of Interior's arresting authorities. The Ministry of Interior, on the other hand, issued a statement claiming the detainees had been arrested because they were collecting money to support terrorism.

Dr Matrouk al-Faleh was arrested in the Saudi Arabian capital, Riyadh, on 19 May 2008. He is held without charge in al-Ha'ir prison for political detainees in Riyadh. He has not been permitted access to a lawyer since his arrest and on occasions has been refused family visits. He is also reported to be denied access to medical attention.

The Saudi Arabian authorities have not disclosed the reason for Dr Matrouk al-Faleh's arrest, but it is believed to be related to the publication of an article he wrote on 17 May about his prison visit to meet two prisoners of conscience, who have since been released. In the article, Dr Matrouk al-Faleh gave a detailed account of harsh prison conditions in al-Buraida prison. The article referred to overcrowding, describing the presence of between thirty and forty prisoners in a cell of a size appropriate for only eight to ten prisoners. It also mentioned a lack of adequate medical care at the prison, referring to a prisoner who, it is alleged, died as a result of medical neglect.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Incommunicado detention and solitary confinement are routine practices in Saudi Arabia. Both are used, along with torture and other ill-treatment, to extract confessions from detainees, to punish them for refusing to repent, or to force them to make undertakings not to criticize the government.

Incommunicado detention in Saudi Arabia often lasts until a confession is obtained, which can take months and occasionally years.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic or English or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to release the nine men immediately and unconditionally as they are held solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to express their conscientiously held beliefs;
- expressing concern that the detainees are being held in solitary confinement;
- urging the authorities to ensure that all the detainees are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and given regular access to their families, their lawyers and any medical attention they may require.

APPEALS TO:

Please note that you may experience difficulties sending faxes on Thursdays and Fridays, which are the weekend in Saudi Arabia.

His Majesty 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 1185 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Majesty

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
P.O. Box 2933
Airport Road
Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: +966 1 403 1185 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

COPIES TO:

Mr Turki bin Khaled Al-Sudairy
President
Human Rights Commission
P.O. Box 58889
King Fahad Road, Building No. 373
Riyadh 11515
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: +966 1 4612061

and to diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia, accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 December 2008.