

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST JAILED AFTER UNFAIR TRIAL

Saudi Arabian human rights activist Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid, a founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), has been sentenced to nine years in prison followed by a nine-year travel ban. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid, 53, founding member of the independent human rights organization ACPRA, and its first president, was sentenced on 13 October to nine years in prison followed by a nine-year travel ban, and a fine of 50,000 Saudi Arabian riyals (about US\$13,300) by the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC). He was convicted of offences including incitement against public order and spreading chaos by taking part in drafting and publishing a statement that called for demonstrations, disrespecting the judicial authorities and participating in setting up an unlicensed organization (understood to be ACPRA).

Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid had been arrested on 17 April 2014 when he followed instructions he received by telephone to go to the Criminal Investigation Department in Buraydah in the central province of al-Qassim. He went there, together with his son, after the *Asr* prayer (afternoon prayer) and was immediately arrested. Days earlier, he and other activists had signed a statement calling for the Minister of Interior to be put on trial "for his policy in suppressing public freedoms". His trial before the SCC started in early July 2014.

He was detained incommunicado at first, and was only allowed family visits after he went on a hunger strike in protest at being unfairly detained. He has only been provided with intermittent treatment for his diabetes, for which he requires a daily medical treatment. He is now detained in al-Qassim prison in Buraydah.

ACPRA was founded in 2009. Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid is the ninth of its founding members to be sent to prison since 2012.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for exercising his rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Urging them to ensure that Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid's sentence is quashed and his conviction overturned;
- Urging them to ensure that he is provided with regular access to his family and any medical treatment he may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 NOVEMBER 2015 TO:

King and Prime Minister

His Majesty Salman 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)
Twitter: @KingSalman
Salutation: Your Majesty

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

And copies to:

President, Human Rights Commission
Bandar Mohammed Abdullah al-Aiban
Human Rights Commission
PO Box 58889, Riyadh 11515
King Fahd Road
Building No. 3, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 418 5101
Email: info@hrc.gov.sa

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 102/14. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/010/2014/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 2012, the Saudi Arabian authorities have been persecuting civil society activists and human rights defenders, including ACPRA members, with complete impunity, using both the courts and extrajudicial means such as the imposition of travel bans.

Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid's brother, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, and another ACPRA co-founder, 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, such as "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 further information on 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.

Since February 2014, the authorities have used the new counter-terror law to further target human rights activists and peaceful dissidents. At least two ACPRA members have seen their trials reopen under the new counter-terror law at the SCC, a special security and counter-terrorism court whose jurisdiction and procedures are unspecified, years after they had been sentenced and while serving their sentence on the same charges under other laws or by other courts. Three other ACPRA members were brought to trial before the SCC after the new counter-terror law was introduced, including Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid.

A number of other independent human rights activists and dissidents have also been harassed by the Saudi Arabian authorities. Lawyer Waleed Abu al-Khair, a human rights defender, was arrested on 15 April 2014 after a hearing before the SCC. He is now serving a 15-year prison sentence, to be followed by 15-year travel ban and a fine, after the court 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" (see UA 98/14, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/1546/2015/en/>).

Human rights activist Issa al-Nukhaifi, a member of ACPRA, has been detained since 15 September 2012, and is now serving a three-year prison term handed down by the SCC on 29 April 2013, mainly for violating Article 6 of Saudi Arabia's cybercrime law (see UA 35/15, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/0017/2015/en/>).

Dr Zuhair Kutbi, a prominent Saudi Arabian writer, commentator and critic, was taken from his home in the city of Mecca on 15 July 2015 by members of the security forces. He was beaten during arrest and has been moved to three different places, where he was interrogated. He has not yet been charged. Amnesty International believes it is likely that he was arrested because of comments he had made on 25 June 2015 on the TV show *Fi al-Samim* (To the Point), on the Rotana Khalijia satellite channel, in which he criticized political repression in Saudi Arabia and argued for reforms including transforming the country's political system into a constitutional monarchy (see UA 188/15, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/0017/2015/en/>).

Name: Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 102/14 Index: MDE 23/2663/2015 Issue Date: 15 October 2015