

# URGENT ACTION

## PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE RESENTENCED TO JAIL

**Saudi Arabian human rights defender Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder has been resentenced under the 2014 counter-terror law to 10 years in prison followed by a 10-year travel ban. He is a prisoner of conscience.**

**Dr Abdulkareem Yousef al-Khoder** was sentenced on 19 October to 10 years in prison, followed by a travel ban of equal duration, by Riyadh's Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), a special security and counter-terror court. A founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), his retrial at the SCC came after an appeal court overturned his prison sentence of eight years by the Criminal Court in Burayda.

Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder's conviction and sentencing by the SCC was on similar charges as in his original trial at the Burayda Criminal Court, and were based on the same allegations. He was found guilty of offences including "inciting disorder by calling for demonstrations", "insulting the judicial authorities" and "taking part in founding an unlicensed organization" (meaning ACPRA). Similar to many other human rights activists, Dr al-Khoder consistently refused to recognize the legitimacy of the SCC.

Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder has been detained since 24 April 2013, the day of his fourth trial session before the Criminal Court in Burayda, when he refused to enter the courtroom after the judge arbitrarily denied women access to the court that day. He was sentenced on 24 June 2013 to eight years in prison and a 10-year travel ban. An appeal court overturned his sentence in January 2014, and sent the case back to another judge in the Criminal Court after ruling that the judge who handed down the sentence had not been impartial and had a personal conflict with Dr al-Khoder.

The new judge ruled in May 2014 that the case did not fall under his jurisdiction and should be transferred to the SCC due to the nature of the charges, a decision that was later upheld by the Court of Appeal. The Criminal Court also ordered the release of Dr al-Khoder pending the trial outcome, but the authorities did not comply.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Dr Abdulkareem Yousef al-Khoder immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Urging them to ensure that Dr al-Khoder's conviction and sentence are quashed.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 DECEMBER 2015 TO:**

#### King and Prime Minister

His Majesty King 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

### **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 second update of UA 167/13. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/005/2014/en/>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dr Abdulkareem Yousef al-Khoder, 49, was dismissed from his post as professor of Comparative Jurisprudence at the Faculty of Islamic Jurisprudence at al-Qassim University in October 2011, apparently because of his activism. He had been under a travel ban since 2010. He is the latest ACPRA member convicted and sentenced to imprisonment by the SCC, a special security and counter-terrorism court whose jurisdiction and procedures are unspecified. Less than a week earlier, on 14 October, the same court had sentenced another founding ACPRA member, Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid, to nine years in prison followed by a nine-year travel ban, and a hefty fine (see UA 102/14, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE23/010/2014/en/>)

Since February 2014, the authorities have used the new counter-terror law to detain and imprison human rights activists and peaceful dissidents. Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder and other ACPRA members have seen their trials reopen under the new counter-terror law at the SCC, years after they had been sentenced by other courts and under other laws, or while serving their sentences on similar charges.

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 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" and "forming an unlicensed organization" (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.

Other activists persecuted by the authorities include human rights defender Fadhel Maki al-Manasif, who was sentenced by the SCC on 17 April 2014 to 15 years' imprisonment, to be followed by a 15-year travel ban, and a fine of 100,000 riyals (about US\$26,600). The charges are related to his activism and his reporting and documentation of discrimination against the Shi'a Muslim population in Saudi Arabia. He said he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated in detention (See UA 304/11, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE23/008/2014/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 Abdulkareem al-Khoder

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 167/13 Index: MDE 23/2715/2015 Issue Date: 23 October 2015