

URGENT ACTION

MOHAMMED SALEH AL-BAJADI RELEASED

Human rights defender Mohammed Saleh al-Bajadi was released on 7 April from a rehabilitation centre where he had spent four months after being discharged from prison in November 2015. He remains banned from travelling until 2020.

Mohammed Saleh al-Bajadi, a founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), was discharged from al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh on 29 November 2015 after serving a four-year prison term. He spent the next four months in a rehabilitation centre designated for "terrorists" and those following "deviant thought", and was released on 7 April 2016.

Mohammed al-Bajadi was sentenced by the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in Riyadh in a secret trial on 10 April 2012 to four years in prison and a five-year travel ban. Although the charge sheet and the sentence have not been made public, leaked letters in his handwriting said that on 10 April 2012 the SCC, which was set up to deal with terrorism and security-related cases, sentenced him to four years' imprisonment followed by a five-year travel ban for participating in the establishment of an unlicensed organization, harming the image of the state through the media, calling on the families of political detainees to protest and hold sit-ins, contesting the independence of the judiciary and having banned books in his possession.

Mohammed al-Bajadi was detained on 21 March 2011, the day after he had taken part in a protest by families of detainees outside the Ministry of Interior in Riyadh. Throughout his detention, mainly at al-Ha'ir Prison in Riyadh, his legal defence team were denied access to him. They were also not allowed to attend hearings, which began in August 2011, despite waiting outside the court for hours. The hearing at which he was sentenced was attended by uniformed soldiers, as well as a representative of the governmental National Human Rights Commission. However, neither his family nor his legal representatives were told that the hearing would take place.

Mohammed al-Bajadi was held incommunicado for almost 10 months, most of which he spent in solitary confinement. He went on hunger strike several times in protest at being detained. He was intravenously force-fed for seven months despite repeated objections and complaints of stomach pain, and he did not receive adequate medical attention.

Mohammed al-Bajadi was brought to the SCC for a retrial on 23 October 2014 after the appeal division had rejected the sentence handed down by the court's first instance division, without telling Mohammed al-Bajadi or his legal representative, and sent the case back to the same court for retrial. He only learnt about his retrial when he was called to the first instance division of the court to attend his first hearing in August 2013. He refused to appear in court without his lawyer, who was finally allowed to attend over a year later in October 2014. The trial sessions remained closed to members of the public.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the sixth update of UA 91/11. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE23/032/2014/en/>

Name: Mohammed Saleh al-Bajadi
Gender m/f: m

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