

# URGENT ACTION

## SAUDI ARABIA ARRESTS WOMEN'S RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**Prominent women human rights defenders Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan and Aziza al-Yousef have been arbitrarily detained incommunicado since mid-May.**

**Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan and Aziza al-Yousef** have been detained by the Saudi Arabian authorities incommunicado and in an unknown location since mid-May. Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan and Aziza al-Yousef are leading campaigners in calling for women's rights to drive, the end of discrimination against women and the abolishment of the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia. Two other human rights activists have also been detained in the same week.

On 19 May, the Saudi Press Agency reported that seven individuals have been arrested for their "suspicious contact with foreign entities", "recruiting people working in sensitive government positions" and "providing financial support to hostile entities abroad with the aim of undermining the security and stability of the Kingdom, and shaking the country's social fabric". It is believed that this statement refers to the three women human rights defenders and the two other activists. Amnesty International believes that these activists have been detained as punishment for their peaceful human rights work. We fear that they may be charged and tried by the notoriously unfair Specialised Criminal Court (SCC), which has been used to try human rights defenders and sentence them to very harsh prison sentences.

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

- Calling on the Saudi Arabian authorities to release the three human rights activists immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging the Saudi Arabian authorities, pending their release, to reveal the whereabouts of the human rights activists and ensure they are given access to their family and a lawyer of their choosing without delay, and that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 06 JULY 2018 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 Justice

His Excellency Dr Walid bin Mohammed

Saleh Al-Samaani

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

University Street, PO Box 7775

Riyadh 11137

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: +966 11 401 1741 / 402 031

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### **And copies to:**

#### Human Rights Commission

Dr Bandar Mohammed Abdullah al-Aiban

North Ring Road, Exit 2

PO Box 58889

Riyadh 11515

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: +966 11 4185101

Email: [info@hrc.gov.sa](mailto:info@hrc.gov.sa)

Twitter: @HRCSaudi

**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.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Loujain al-Hathloul was first detained in Saudi Arabia for 10 weeks after driving her car to the Saudi Arabian border from the United Arab Emirates. She was brought to trial before the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), the country's counter-terror court, on a list of charges related to her driving and online activism in support of the campaign for women to be able to drive. She was eventually released on 12 February 2015, but her legal status remained unclear. She was again arrested on 4 June 2017 at King Fahad International Airport in Dammam as she arrived in Saudi Arabia from a trip abroad. She was questioned about her activism and was released four days later. The conditions of her release remained unclear.

Iman al-Nafjan is a dedicated human rights defender and blogger who was one of the leading campaigners for the right to drive. Aziza al-Yousef is a fellow leading campaigner for the right to drive and to end the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia. The retired university professor has also worked extensively in helping women who have fled domestic violence and abuse. Both women also defied the driving ban in 2013, and authorities have repeatedly interrogated and harassed them for their ongoing human rights work.

Two of the other arrested activists are Dr. Ibrahim al-Modeimigh and Mohammad al-Rabea. Dr. Ibrahim al-Modeimigh is a lawyer and advocate of women's rights. Mohammad al-Rabea is a youth activist who started a literary salon for young men and women in Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh.

The recent wave of arrests is emblematic of an ongoing crackdown on human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia, and continued stifling of freedom of expression, association, and assembly. In the past months, several human rights defenders have been tried before the SCC and have been handed down harsh prison sentences, as well as social media and travel bans under provisions of the counter-terror law, its follow up decrees and the Anti-Cyber Crime law (See Press Release: Saudi Arabia: First human rights defenders sentenced under leadership of 'reformer' Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/01/saudi-arabia-first-human-rights-defenders-sentenced-under-leadership-of-reformer-crown-prince-mohammad-bin-salman/>).

According to the information available to Amnesty International, the Royal Decree 44/A of February 2014, one of the follow-up decrees to the counter-terrorism law, has first been invoked in the trial of human rights defenders in February 2018. In February 2018, Essam Koshak, a human rights activist known for using social media to call for reform and respect for human rights in Saudi Arabia, as well as Issa al-Nukheifi, a human rights activist" were both sentenced to four years in prison followed by a four-year travel ban and to six years in prison followed by a six-year travel ban respectively. In the cases of both Issa al-Nukheifi and Essam Koshak, the prosecutor has sought the maximum possible punishment for the charges, which according to Royal Decree 44/A carries up to 20 years in prison for, among other things, "affiliation with religious and intellectual extremist groups or groups that are classified as terrorist organizations nationally, regionally or internationally".

Name: Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Yousef  
Gender m/f: all f

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