

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture or ill-treatment

SAUDI ARABIA

Dr Matrouk al-Falih (m), Professor of political science at King Sa'ud University, Riyadh  
Dr Abdullah al-Hamid (m), former professor of contemporary literature at Imam Muhammad bin Sa'ud University, Riyadh  
Muhammad Sa'id Tayyab (m), retired journalist  
Dr Tawfiq al-Qussayyir (m), professor of Electronics at King Sa'ud University  
Suleyman al-Rashudi (m), retired lawyer  
Up to six others

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Up to 11 people, including the five named above, have been arrested since 15 March 2004, apparently for criticising the government-appointed human rights watchdog. They are reportedly held incommunicado at the General Intelligence (*al-Mabahith al-'Amma*) in 'Ulaysha, in the capital, Riyadh. Amnesty International is concerned that they may be at risk of torture and ill-treatment.

The detainees, who are mostly prominent academics, were reportedly arrested because they criticised the National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR), which was established by the government over a week ago, and for planning to set up their own human rights organisation. They are said to have criticised the NCHR for its lack of independence from the government. According to one press report an official at the Ministry of Interior announced that the detainees were suspected of issuing "statements which do not serve the unity of the country and the cohesion of society...based on the Islamic religion". The government has not disclosed any acts committed by the detainees which could be considered recognizably criminal offences. Amnesty International is therefore concerned that they may be prisoners of conscience, held solely of the non-violent exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association.

Three detainees were reportedly released today. It is not yet known whether they were tortured in custody.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Critics of the state are often at risk of indefinite detention without charge or trial. They are also often ill-treated or tortured. Defendants do not have the right to formal representation by a lawyer and in many cases they and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Due to the secrecy of the Saudi Arabian justice system, trials are often held behind closed doors. In the rare instances when individuals are charged and brought to trial, the proceedings invariably fail to meet the most elementary standards of fairness.

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all the detainees if they are held solely for their criticism of the NCHR or for planning to set up their own human rights organisation;
- asking the authorities to ensure that all detainees are protected from torture and ill-treatment and given regular access to their families, lawyers of their own choosing and any medical attention they may need;
- calling for anyone charged with a recognizably criminal offence to be given a prompt and fair trial.

### **APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin >Abdul >Aziz,

Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior  
P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road,  
Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Telegram:** **Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Fax:** **+ 966 1 403 1185 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)**  
**Telex:** **404416**  
**Salutation:** **Your Royal Highness**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin >Abdul >Aziz Al-Saud,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Nasseriya Street,  
Riyadh 11124, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Telegram:** **Foreign Affairs Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Fax:** **+ 966 1 403 0159 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)**  
**Telex:** **405000**  
**Salutation:** **Your Royal Highness**

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr. >Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh  
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice  
University Street,  
Riyadh 11137, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Telegram:** **Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Fax:** **+ 966 1 401 1741**  
**Telex:** **405 980 MINJUS SJ**  
**Salutation:** **Your Excellency**

King and Prime Minister

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines

His Majesty King Fahd bin >Abdul >Aziz Al-Saud,  
Office of H.M. The King, Royal Court,  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Telegram:** **King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Salutation:** **Your Majesty**

**COPIES 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 28 April 2004.