

UA 118/99 Fear of ill treatment / Health concerns / Possible prisoners of conscience 24

SAUDI ARABIA Ishaq al-Sheikh Yaqub, Saudi Arabian journalist, aged 70

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of 70-year-old journalist Ishaq al-Sheikh Yaqub, imprisoned since 11 April 1999, when he was arrested on his return to Saudi Arabia from Bahrain. Ishaq al-Sheikh Yaqub was arrested at King Fahd Bridge at the end of the causeway which links the two countries. He was taken to prison in Riyadh and was reportedly beaten during questioning.

Amnesty International is concerned for his safety because of his age, and because he suffers from high blood pressure. Amnesty International is further concerned that he may be a prisoner of conscience, arrested purely for his activity as a journalist. He has reportedly not been informed of any criminal charges against him, when or if he will be brought to court, or when or if he will be released. He has no access to a lawyer.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The government of Saudi Arabia enforces strict press censorship, especially with regard to politics. Political parties and trade unions are banned and perceived political dissidents are often subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic or your own language:

- calling for immediate clarification of the whereabouts of Ishaq al-Sheikh Yaqub, detained on 11 April 1999, and seeking assurances that he will not be tortured, that he is treated humanely and given prompt and regular access to relatives, lawyers and medical attention if necessary;
- expressing concern that he may be a prisoner of conscience and, if he is not, seeking information about the reasons for his arrest, any charges brought against him and details of any trial proceedings.

APPEALS TO:

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines

His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul'Aziz
Office of H.M. The King
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness, Prince Naif bin 'Abdul' Aziz
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
PO Box 2833, Airport Road
Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Faxes: +966 1 403 1185 (this is a telephone and fax, please ask to be connected to the fax if a voice answers)
Telexes: 404416
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency

Dr. Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams:Justice Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes:405 980 MINJUS SJ
Salutation:Your Excellency

Minister of Information

His Excellency Dr. Fuad Abdul Salam Al-Farsi,
Minister of Information
Ministry of Information
P.O. Box 843
Riyadh 11161
Telex:401641 ARINFOR SJ
402640 MINMO SJ
Fax:966-1-402-3570/405-0674
Salutation: Your Excellency

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 5 July 1999.