

# URGENT ACTION

## FORMER JUDGE HELD INCOMMUNICADO

**A former judge in Saudi Arabia is being held incommunicado and is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. He was arrested on 12 December, following a lecture he gave on the legality of demonstrations in Shari'a law. He is a prisoner of conscience.**

**Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi**, a 76-year-old former judge, was arrested on 12 December. The exact details are not clear, but at the time he was travelling by car from the capital Riyadh to Qassim to visit a prominent cleric who had been released from prison. According to his family, Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi's son was contacted by security forces and told to come and collect his father's personal belongings. This arrest came two days after Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi had given a lecture in an informal social gathering on the legality of holding demonstrations in Shari'a law. A video of his lecture was posted on YouTube and Twitter on 11 December.

Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi is being held incommunicado and in solitary confinement in al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh, and is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. His family only learned around the end of December that he was held there when they were told that some detainees in al-Ha'ir prison – who had been detained with him previously – had recognized his voice when he was performing the call to prayer from his cell.

On 8 January, his family told Amnesty International that the Saudi Arabian government's Human Rights Commission had told them that they had visited him and that he was fine, but that the family would not be allowed to do so as "the laws allow for such denial of access for six months extendable to one year" and that they should be patient. His wife said she went to the Bureau of Investigation and General Prosecution to ask to see him and appoint a lawyer but was told, "your husband is forbidden from giving lectures and he did what is forbidden", and was denied access. The authorities appear thereby to have indicated that Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi is being held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression; Amnesty International therefore considers him a prisoner of conscience.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- Asking them to ensure that Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and given immediate and regular access to his family, lawyers and any medical attention that he may require.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 FEBRUARY 2013 TO:**

#### King and Prime Minister

King Abdullah 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 1 403 3125 (please keep trying)  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

#### Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed  
bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud  
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,  
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 1 403 3125 (please keep  
trying)  
**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

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

#### Minister of Justice

His Excellency Shaykh Dr Mohammed  
bin Abdulkareem Al-Issa  
Ministry of Justice  
University Street  
Riyadh 11137  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: + 966 1 401 1741/ +966 1 402 0311  
**Salutation: His Excellency**

### **Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 27/07. Further information:  
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/007/2007/en>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi and eight other men were detained in February 2007 in the cities of Jeddah and Medina after they circulated a petition calling for political reform and discussed a proposal to establish an independent human rights organization in Saudi Arabia. Seven other men were arrested later in connection to one of the nine men. They were held for years without charge or trial until August 2010 when all 16 men were formally charged. Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi was released on bail on 23 June 2011 after two people provided personal guarantees.

On 22 November 2011, Dr Suliaman al-Rushudi was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment and given a 15-year travel ban by the Specialized Criminal Court, a court set up to deal with terrorism-related offences. The other 15 men were also sentenced to between five and 30 years' imprisonment. All were convicted of breaking allegiance to the King. Dr al-Rushudi was convicted of "participating in forming an organization called *Tawasso'* in order to spread chaos under the cover of advice and reform". *Tawasso'* is a reference to the human rights organization some of the men had planned on setting up. In January 2012 the men submitted appeals. Dr Suliaman al-Rushudi remained at liberty pending his appeal. It appears that the Saudi Arabian authorities may consider that a condition of his liberty is not giving lectures, but his family says that they are unaware of the details of any such conditions. Amnesty International considers that he was sentenced to imprisonment solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly and that, consequently, there should be no conditions attached to his liberty.

In Saudi Arabia criticism of the state is generally not tolerated. Those who do criticize the government, their policies or practices, are often held incommunicado without charge, sometimes in solitary confinement, denied access to lawyers or the courts to challenge the lawfulness of their detention. Torture or other ill-treatment is frequently used to extract "confessions" from detainees, to punish them for refusing to "repent", or to force them to make undertakings not to criticize the government. Incommunicado detention often lasts until a "confession" is obtained, which can take months and occasionally years.

If a person is charged, it is sometimes with vague security-related offences such as "disobeying the ruler". Legal proceedings fall far short of international standards for fair trial; defendants are generally denied legal counsel, and in many cases, they and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Court hearings are often held behind closed doors.

For more information on violations of freedom of expression in the name of security see the Amnesty International report, *Saudi Arabia: Repression in the name of security* (MDE 23/016/2011) (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/016/2011/en>).

Name: Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi  
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 27/07 Index: MDE 23/004/2013 Issue Date: 10 January 2013