

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 344/94 Mass arbitrary arrests / incommunicado detention /
Fear of torture or ill-treatment

19 September 1994

SAUDI ARABIA Sheikh Salman bin Fahd al-'Awda, aged 39, religious scholar
Sheikh Safr 'Abdul-Rahman al-Hawali, aged 40, former Head of Shari'a Department
at 'Um al-Qura University
Sheikh 'Ayedh al-Qarani, aged 39, religious scholar
'Abdullah al-Jalali, aged 70, business man
Dr. Nasser al-Umar, aged 40, lecturer at al-Imam University
Sulaiman al-Rushudi, lawyer
Dr. Khalid al-Duwaish, aged 40, lecturer at King Sa'ud University
Dr. Bishr al-Bishr, aged 37, lecturer at al-Imam University
Tuyan al-Tuyan, journalist at 'Akadh newspaper
Ahmad bin Saleh al-Sa'wi, student
and hundreds of others

Those named above are reported to be among hundreds of suspected Sunni Islamist opponents of the government arrested between 13 and 19 September 1994 by *al-Mabahith al-'Ama* (General Intelligence) and other security forces. The vast majority were arrested in the towns of al-Buraida, al-'Unaiza and al-Bukayriya in al-Qaseem Province. They include religious scholars, businessmen, students and academics. They are being held in incommunicado detention in al-Hair prison, General Intelligence headquarters in al-'Ulaisha and in police stations in al-Quseem and Riyadh. The latest arrests have followed the detention of Sheikh Salman al-'Awda and Sheikh Safr al-Hawali, on 13 and 17 September respectively. Both are prominent religious figures and critics of the ruling royal family.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned that those arrested may be subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hundreds of Sunni Islamist opponents of the government have been arrested since April 1994, following the transfer to London of the headquarters of Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights-CDLR and the opening in London of the offices of another opposition group: the Advice and Reformation Committee (*Hay'at al-Nasiha wal Islah*) led by Sheikh Usama bin Ladin. The CDLR was founded in Riyadh on 3 May 1993 by six prominent religious scholars and professionals. It was banned on 11 May and many of its supporters and members were arrested. They were released a few months later after signing an undertaking to disband the Committee.

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

- seeking assurances that the above named people and those detained in connection with the recent arrests of Sunni Islamists are being treated humanely and urging that they be allowed access to family members, defence counsel and doctors;
- urging that they be immediately released unless charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO

His Royal Highness

Prince Naif bin 'Abdul-'Aziz
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Telegrams: Minister of the Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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Salutations: Your Royal Highness

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 31 October 1994.