

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 23/006/2005

17 May 2005

Further Information on UA 112/04 (MDE 23/003/2004, 17 March 2004) and follow-up (MDE 23/005/2004, 30 April 2004; MDE 23/009/2004, 02 July 2004) - Fear of Torture and Ill-Treatment New concern: Prisoners of conscience

**SAUDI ARABIA** Dr Matrouk al-Falih, (m), aged 54, Professor of Political Science at King Sa'ud University, Riyadh  
Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, (m), aged 56, former professor of contemporary literature at Imam Muhammad bin Sa'ud University, Riyadh  
Ali al Deminy, (m), aged 56, writer  
Abdel Rahman al-Lahem, (m), Lawyer

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On 15 May, prisoners of conscience, Dr Matrouk al-Falih, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Ali al Deminy were imprisoned by a closed court in Riyadh after an unfair trial. The men have one month to appeal this decision. Amnesty International had asked the authorities whether they could send an observer to the trial, but were denied a travel permit.

Dr Matrouk al-Falih was sentenced to six years imprisonment, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid to seven years and Ali al Deminy to nine years on charges that included "sowing dissent and disobeying the ruler." The men were arrested in 2004 when they called for political reform. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience detained solely for the peaceful criticism of the government and as such calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

Lawyer, Abdel Rahman al-Lahem was arrested in March 2004 along with up to 11 others, including the three men named above who he had been representing. He was released in May 2004 but re-arrested in November 2004 after an appeal sent by the men to Crown Prince Abdullah criticising the fairness of the judiciary was made public. He remains detained without trial at al Ha'ir prison in Riyadh. Amnesty International also considers him to be a prisoner of conscience detained solely for carrying out his legitimate work as a lawyer.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The secrecy surrounding the criminal justice system is such that trials often take place behind closed doors. Critics of the state are at risk of indefinite detention without charge or trial. They are often subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Defendants do not have the right to formal representation by a lawyer nor are they informed of the charges against them or the progress of the legal proceedings against them. In the rare instances when people are charged and brought to trial, the proceedings invariably fail to meet the minimum international standards for fair trial.

**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 prisoners of conscience Dr Matrouk al-Falih, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, Ali al Deminy and Abdel Rahman al-Lahem;
- seeking assurances that the detainees will not be tortured or ill-treated, and that they will be given prompt and regular access to their families, lawyers and any medical attention, if necessary;
- expressing concern that the detainees did not have a trial which met international standards for a 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

**Fax:** + 966 1 403 1185 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)

**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

**Fax:** + 966 1 403 0159 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)

**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

**Fax:** + 966 1 401 1741

**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

**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 27 June 2005.