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05 February 2007

UA 27/07 Incommunicado detention/fear of torture

SAUDI ARABIA Sulieman al-Rushudi (m), lawyer

Essam al-Basrawi (m), lawyer

Dr Saud al-Hashimi (m), medical doctor

Al-Sharif Saif Al-Ghalib (m)

Dr Musa al-Qirni, university profesor (m)

Dr Abdel Rahman al-Shumayri (m), university professor

'Abdelaziz al-Khariji (m)

At least three others

At least 10 men, including the seven named above, were arrested in the cities of Jeddah and Madinah on 3 February. They are held incommunicado and are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. Amnesty International believes that they may have been detained solely for their peaceful activities in defence of human rights.

They are reportedly held in the offices of the General Intelligence Service (*al-Mabahith al-'Amma*) in Jeddah. Relatives of some of the men reportedly asked the General Intelligence Service to let them see the men, but have not yet been able to do so.

The Ministry of the Interior is reported to have issued a statement claiming the detainees had been arrested because they were collecting money to "help terrorism". However, according to other sources they were targeted because they were active as human rights defenders and advocates of peaceful political change. Some of them had been detained before because of their work in defence of human rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Saudi Arabian authorities regularly hold detainees incommunicado, when they are frequently tortured and otherwise ill-treated. This can last for months or years, often until a confession is obtained.

In March 2004 a group of reformists signed a petition calling for changes to the system of government. Some members of this group were arrested, including Sulieman al-Rushudi and Al-Sharif Saif Al-Ghalib, but these two were released after some weeks. Others were held for much longer, and were adopted as prisoners of conscience. They were eventually released in 2005.

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

- expressing concern at reports that at least 10 men (naming the seven) were arrested in Jeddah and Madinah on 3 February and are held incommunicado;
- asking the authorities to ensure that all the detainees are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and given regular access to their families, their lawyers and any medical attention they may require;
- asking why exactly they have been detained, and what if any charges they are facing;
- calling on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally if they are held solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to express their conscientiously held beliefs;
- asking for details of any trial proceedings.

APPEALS TO:

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

Salutation: Your Majesty

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud 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

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+966 1 403 3614 Salutation: Your Royal Highness

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 0645 Salutation: 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 19 March 2007.*******