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Saudi Arabia: Amnesty International plans to attend trial of Hani el-Sayegh

Amnesty International has today informed the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Britain, Dr Ghazi al-Gosaibi, that it is proposing to send a delegation to observe the trial proceedings of Saudi Arabian national, Hani el-Sayegh.

“We are concerned that Hani el-Sayegh’s arrest, immediately after his return to Saudi Arabia, remains shrouded in secrecy,” Amnesty International said today.

Hani el-Sayegh was returned against his will to Saudi Arabia by the United States Government on 11 October and was detained immediately upon arrival.

Press reports have quoted the Minister of Interior, Prince Naif bin ‘Abdul-‘Aziz, as having acknowledged the detention of Hani el-Sayegh, and that he is now in the “...*hands of Saudi justice...*” and would be interrogated and tried. The Minister has also been quoted as having said that “...*we have specific information and evidence confirming Hani el-Sayegh’s involvement in the unjust terrorist act in the city of al-Khobar...*” which occurred in June 1996 and resulted in the killing of 19 US servicemen. Such accusations could carry the death penalty.

“Of course, the Saudi Arabian Government has the right to bring to justice anyone suspected of a recognizably criminal offence, but the organization seeks to ensure that all trial proceedings in such cases conform to international standards for fair trials -- including the presumption of innocence,” Amnesty International said.

“One of our practises of ensuring the accuracy of information and the adherence to international standards for fair trials, is to send a delegation to observe the trials first hand.”

The human rights organization sought assurances in the letter sent to the Saudi Arabian Government that Hani el-Sayegh is protected from torture and is granted access to family members, lawyers of his choice and being given prompt access to judges.

“What is worrying is that the exact whereabouts of Hani el-Sayegh are not known, and we don’t know if any formal charges or judicial proceedings have been brought against him,” Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International believes that the US Government, as the country that turned him over, should accept responsibility for ensuring that Hani el-Sayegh is protected. It should also clarify the assurances offered by the Saudi Arabian Government that he will not be tortured by making the exact wording of these assurances public. ENDS.../

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on 44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>