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Saudi Arabia: "We have nothing to hide"

Amnesty International welcomed the news that Saudi Arabia had invited the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers to visit Saudi Arabia.

"We hope that the visit will take place in the year 2000 and that the Special Rapporteur will report to the 2001 session of the UN Commission on Human Rights." Amnesty International said.

Saudi Arabia delivered a statement at yesterday's session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in response to an intervention earlier in the day by the European Union which referred to human rights violations in Saudi Arabia, among other countries.

Amnesty International noted that the Saudi Arabian delegation expressed the desire to cooperate with the Commission on the basis of "transparency, clarity and objectivity" and stated that "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has nothing to hide". These statements echo responses by government officials reported in the media during the last two days.

Amnesty International launched its first global campaign against human rights violations in Saudi Arabia on 28 March, and has yet to receive a direct response from the government to its report and requests to discuss its findings.

"We hope this will mark the beginning of frank and far reaching discussion of human rights issues," said Amnesty International's Secretary General Pierre Sané, "and that we will receive a positive response to our outstanding requests to the authorities to send a delegation to Saudi Arabia for talks with the government and judicial officials, fact-finding and trial observation. We trust that this is a stepping stone towards resolving the serious human rights concerns that we have outlined in our report."
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For additional information please see the following Amnesty International materials:

Saudi Arabia: A Secret State of Suffering AI Index: MDE 23/01/00

Saudi Arabia: End Secrecy, End Suffering - an Amnesty International briefing, AI Index MDE 23/16/00

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London,

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