

# URGENT ACTION

## PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE ALLEGES TORTURE

**Prisoner of conscience Dr Saud al-Hashimi is alleged to have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in Saudi Arabia, and forced to sign a confession. He is a prisoner of conscience, detained for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly.**

Amnesty International has received information that **Dr Saud al-Hashimi**, a medical doctor aged 46, was subjected to torture or other ill-treatment at Dhahban prison in western Saudi Arabia. In December he was alleged to have been stripped of his clothes and placed in an extremely cold room for four days until he signed a statement confessing to allegations against him and stating that he did not want a lawyer during his court sessions. Days later, on 1 January, he was brought before a judge, but, when he tried to explain that he had signed under duress, the judge neither responded nor took any action with regards to his allegations. He is held in solitary confinement and is said to be suffering from a colon infection, to have high blood pressure and to be in need of medical treatment.

The statement which he signed listed allegations against him which include contacting the Al Jazeera television station, instigating young people to disobey Saudi Arabia's ruler, contacting Sa'ad al-Faqih (founder and head of the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia, otherwise known as the Islah Movement, an opposition group based in the UK), collecting money without the permission of the ruler, forming a secret organization to overthrow the ruling regime, and money laundering.

Dr Saud al-Hashimi and at least six other men were detained in February 2007 in the cities of Jeddah and Madinah after they circulated a petition calling for political reform and discussed a proposal to establish an independent human rights organization in Saudi Arabia. They are all held in Dhahban prison.

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Expressing concern about reports that Dr Saud al-Hashimi was tortured or otherwise ill-treated and asking for the allegations to be investigated by an independent and impartial body and those responsible to be brought to justice;
- Calling on the authorities to provide Dr Saud al-Hashimi with all necessary medical treatment without delay;
- Reminding them that any statements made by Dr Saud al-Hashimi as a result of torture or other ill-treatment should not be used as evidence against him, in accordance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which Saudi Arabia is a party;
- Calling on the authorities to release immediately and unconditionally Dr Saud al-Hashimi and all those held with him solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to express their conscientiously held beliefs;
- Urging 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.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 FEBRUARY 2011 TO:

Second Deputy Prime Minister and  
Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin  
'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud, Ministry of the  
Interior, P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road  
Riyadh 11134

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Fax: +966 1 403 1185 (please keep  
trying)**

**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

King

His Majesty 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

**Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior)  
+966 1 403 1185 (please keep trying)**

**Salutation: Your Majesty**

### And copies to:

President, Human Rights Commission  
Bandar Mohammed 'Abdullah al-Aiban

Human Rights Commission  
P.O. Box 58889, King Fahad Road,  
Building No. 373, Riyadh 11515

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Email: [hrc@haq-ksa.org](mailto:hrc@haq-ksa.org)**

**Salutation: Dear Dr al-Aiban**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 312/08. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/045/2008>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Other men detained for their calls for reform along with Dr Saud al-Hasimi include al-Sharif Saif al-Ghalib, Dr Musa al-Qirni, Dr 'Abdel Rahman al-Shumayri, Fahd al-Qirshi, 'Abdel Rahman Khan and 'Abdelaziz al-Khariji. They had also challenged the impunity enjoyed by Ministry of Interior officials who carry out arrests and detentions. The Ministry of Interior claimed in a statement that they were arrested because they were collecting money to support terrorism; the detainees deny this.

Dr Saud al-Hashimi has previously reported being tortured or otherwise ill-treated. In October 2010 he was said to have been subjected to electric shocks and in June 2009, he was stripped of all his clothes, except his underwear, shackled and dragged from his cell and placed in a severely cold cell for about five hours, because he was on hunger strike.

Critics of the Saudi Arabian government face gross human rights violations at the hands of branches of the security forces under the control of the Ministry of Interior. They are often held incommunicado without charge, denied access to lawyers and the courts to challenge the lawfulness of their detention, and tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Legal proceedings fall far short of international standards for fair trial: defendants are generally denied legal counsel, and in many cases they and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Court hearings are often held behind closed doors.

Incommunicado detention and solitary confinement are routine practices in Saudi Arabia. Both are used, along with torture and other ill-treatment, to extract confessions from detainees, to punish them for refusing to "repent", or to force them to make undertakings not to criticize the government. Incommunicado detention in Saudi Arabia often lasts until a confession is obtained, which can take months and occasionally years.

The UN Human Rights Committee has commented that routine prolonged solitary confinement is inconsistent with the obligation on states to ensure prisoners are treated with humanity and with respect for their inherent dignity (General Comment 21/44, 6 April 1992).

Saudi Arabia is a state party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which prohibits the use of evidence extracted under torture or other ill-treatment. Article 15 states: "Each State Party shall ensure that any statement which is established to have been made as a result of torture shall not be invoked as evidence in any proceedings, except against a person accused of torture as evidence that the statement was made."

For further information regarding the detention of peaceful critics of the state and human rights activists among thousands of others who have been arrested arbitrarily since 11 September 2001, please see Amnesty International's report *Saudi Arabia: Assaulting human rights in the name of counter-terrorism*, 22 July 2009 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/saudi-arabia-human-rights-abuses-name-fighting-terrorism-20090722>) and the update to the report *Saudi Arabia: Countering terrorism with repression*, issued on 11 September 2009 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/025/2009/en>).

Further information on UA: 312/08 Index: MDE 23/001/2011 Issue Date: 14 January 2011

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