

# URGENT ACTION

## MEN DETAINED FOR FOUNDING POLITICAL PARTY

**Four Saudi Arabian men are believed to be held in virtual incommunicado detention in al-Ha'ir prison in the Saudi Arabian capital, Riyadh. They are all at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. Amnesty International is concerned that they may be held solely for the peaceful expression of their right to freedom of expression and association and therefore be prisoners of conscience.**

The four, **Dr Ahmad bin Sa'd al-Ghamdi, Abdul Aziz al-Wuhaibi, Muhammad bin Hussain al-Qahtani** and **Muhammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi**, along with three other Saudi Arabian men, were arrested on 16 February by men believed to be members of the Interior Ministry's General Intelligence, a week after they and others had submitted a request for recognition of what would be Saudi Arabia's first political party, the Islamic Omma Party (Hizb al-Umma al-Islami). All were asked to sign an undertaking that they would renounce their activities with the party. The four men named above refused to and have remained in detention. The three others did sign such an undertaking and were subsequently released.

**Abdul Aziz al-Wuhaibi** was allowed a short phone call to his family on 18 February and told them that he was being detained in al-Ha'ir prison. He has reportedly not been allowed any other contact with the outside world. The whereabouts of the three other men still detained are not known, but it is believed that they are also being held in virtual incommunicado detention in al-Ha'ir prison.

The Islamic Omma Party was founded by nine men, including intellectuals, writers and lawyers, on 9 February. They have stated that their values stem from Islamic teachings and the principles of justice, freedom and charity and that their goals include greater political freedoms in Saudi Arabia, such as people having the right to choose who they are governed by, the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers, the independence of the judiciary, social justice and equal opportunities for all without discrimination. Neither political parties, independent organizations nor trade unions are tolerated in Saudi Arabia, and efforts to establish them are routinely repressed.

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

- 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;
- Noting that if the four men (Dr Ahmad bin Sa'd al-Ghamdi, Abdul Aziz al-Wuhaibi, Muhammad bin Hussain al-Qahtani and Muhammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi) are being held solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and association, Amnesty International would consider them to be prisoners of conscience and call for their immediate and unconditional release;
- Asking for details of any charges they face to be made public and calling on the authorities to ensure that any legal proceedings against them conform to international fair trial standards.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 APRIL 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**  
**Salutation: Dear Dr al-Aiban**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# URGENT ACTION

## MEN DETAINED FOR FOUNDING POLITICAL PARTY

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Critics of the Saudi Arabian government face gross human rights violations at the hands of security forces under the control of the Ministry of Interior. They are often held incommunicado without charge, sometimes in solitary confinement, prevented from consulting lawyers and denied access to the courts to challenge the lawfulness of their detention. Torture or other ill-treatment are frequently used 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.

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.

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.”

At least seven men were arrested 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. Among those still detained include Dr Saud al-Hasimi, Al-Sharif Saif al-Ghalib, Dr Musa al-Qirni, Dr ‘Abdel Rahman al-Shumayri, Fahd al-Qirshi, ‘Abdel Rahman Khan and Sulieman al-Rushudi. 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.

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*, issued on 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>).

UA: 42/11 Index: MDE 23/002/2011 Issue Date: 23 February 2011

