

# URGENT ACTION

## PROFESSOR RELEASED, NO FURTHER ACTION NEEDED

**Law professor Dr Mohammed ‘Abdullah al-‘Abdulkareem was released on 15 February. He was arrested in relation to an article he wrote about the Saudi Arabian royal family and the future of Saudi Arabia which was posted on his Facebook page.**

Dr Mohammed al-‘Abdulkareem, a 40-year-old law professor who is married with three children, was released on 15 February following over two months’ detention in al-Ha’ir prison in Riyadh. He was arrested on 5 December 2010 in the afternoon, at his home, by four men in civilian clothes believed to be members of the Interior Ministry’s General Intelligence (al-Mabahith al-‘Ammah), as well as several police officers in uniform. A few minutes after his arrest he called his wife and told her that he was being taken to the General Intelligence prison but would return that night. He was arrested in relation to an article he wrote and posted on his Facebook page on 23 November 2010. He was interrogated about the article during his time in detention. He was released but was told that his case file was being kept open and as such could be brought to trial at any time.

The article, written in Arabic, is entitled “The crisis of political conflict among the ruling factions in Saudi Arabia”. It asks the question “Is the continuation of the Kingdom as united in one entity conditional on the existence of the [ruling] family?” and answers it by reviewing the uncertainty around succession in the royal family and other institutional processes affecting the future of Saudi Arabia. The article does not make reference to or advocate violence in any way.

Dr Mohammed al-‘Abdulkareem is a professor in the Faculty of Islamic Jurisprudence in the Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh and editor-in-chief of a journal on Islamic issues entitled Congress of the Nation. On 29 November, the administration of his university summoned him to a meeting and asked him if he had written the article; he refused to reply.

**No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**

This is the first update of UA 249/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/mde23/015/2010>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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.

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