URGENT ACTION

SHI'A CLERIC RELEASED

Saudi Arabian Shi'a cleric Sheikh Tawfiq Jaber Ibrahim al-'Amr was released on 6 March without charge after being detained for a week incommunicado. He was arrested following a sermon he gave calling for reforms in Saudi Arabia.

Sheikh Tawfiq Jaber Ibrahim al-'Amr is a Shi'a religious cleric in the province of al-Ahsa. During his sermon on 25 February in Umat al-Islam Mosque in al-Hafouf city in al-Ahsa province he called for the need for deep-rooted reform in Saudi Arabia, including for a constitutional monarchy, fair distribution of jobs, and an end to discrimination against religious minorities. On the evening of 27 February members of General Intelligence (al-Mabahith al-'Amma) came to his house and asked him to accompany them. He appears to have been taken away shortly afterwards. His family waited all evening but did not hear from him. Around half past midnight a member of General Intelligence contacted a member of his family to say that he had been arrested and was being held at the Department of General Intelligence in al- Dammam. The relative asked if the family could visit him and was told no.

He had been arrested and briefly detained on two previous occasions. The first was around three years ago apparently in connection with an art exhibition he organized for 'Ashura, a Shi'a festival. He was detained for about three days. The second was about two years ago when he was arrested seemingly in connection with practising aspects of the Shi'a faith. He was detained for about 10 days. Sometime after his release he was brought before a court accused of incitement against the government. The trial was adjourned to allow the prosecution time to provide evidence to substantiate the claim. Nothing is known to have happened with the case since.

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

This is the first update of UA 58/11. Further information: http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/004/2011/en

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