

URGENT ACTION

SAUDI ARABIA: RELEASE 10 EGYPTIAN NUBIAN MEN

Ten Egyptian men of the Nubian ethnicity are due to appear for their first hearing before the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh on 10 November 2021. Saudi Arabian authorities have detained them without charge since 14 July 2020 in relation to a peaceful community event they had been planning. At least two of the men are older people and suffer health ailments. Amnesty International urges Saudi Arabian authorities to release all the men immediately.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
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Your Majesty,

On 10 November, **10 Egyptian Nubian men** are due to attend their first hearing before the [Specialized Criminal Court](#) (SCC), after having been detained for almost 16 months without charge. The Saudi General Directorate of Investigation (al-Mabahith) arrested the men on 14 July 2020, in relation to a cultural event they had planned on 25 October 2019 to mark the 1973 Arab-Israeli war.

According to one of the detainees' relatives, the men were first arrested on the morning of the said event. Saudi security officials interrogated them about the event, namely accusing them of failing to include the photo of Egyptian President General Abdelfattah al-Sisi in the event's announcement poster, alongside other Egyptian army generals. The detained men explained that the event was not political but rather focused on celebrating Nubian soldiers who had taken part in that war. On 25 December 2019, after two months in detention without charge, the men were released on travel ban pending the case's resumption. On 14 July 2020, all 10 men were re-arrested and detained in al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh, the Saudi capital. In April 2021, they were transferred to Assir prison in Abha city, where they have been denied access to lawyers of their choosing, appointed instead lawyers by the authorities, and have continued to be held without charge. The Egyptian consulate in Riyadh has failed to date to provide any consular assistance or facilitate the consular rights of those detained, despite the families' recurrent pleas for action. Instead, it issued a statement on 29 October 2020 supporting their detention.

A relative of one of the men told Amnesty International: "Some of the detainees are senior and suffer ailments like diabetes, gangrene and cardiovascular problems. They are rarely allowed to contact their families, and they fear speaking on the phone because of surveillance."

I urge you to release all ten men immediately as they are detained solely for peacefully exercising their human rights. Pending their release, I call on you to ensure that they have full access to medical care, lawyers of their choice and regular contact with their families. Furthermore, I urge you to protect minorities of all ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities, and grant them their basic human right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and association in Saudi Arabia.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Nubians are a minority ethnic group in Egypt and Sudan and have been historically marginalized and discriminated against on the basis of their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic identity. In 1964, the Egyptian government forcibly displaced thousands of Nubians from their homes in southern Egypt, to build the Aswan High Dam which caused the flooding of several Nubian villages and further displacement. The displaced Nubian population resettled in other areas, and many migrated to the Arab Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, seeking work. To preserve their culture and heritage, the Nubian diaspora established Nubian cultural and social associations. For decades, Nubian associations have operated normally in Saudi Arabia, focusing strictly on cultural and social activities away from politics.

Since the early 2000s, Nubian activists' demands for the return to their ancestral land and compensation accelerated. Article 236 of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution stipulated for the first time the implementation of a comprehensive development plan for marginalized areas including Nubia, with participation of local communities, with the view of preserving their heritage. To that end, a coalition of 40 Nubian associations was formed in Riyadh in early 2020 to call on Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to abide by Article 236 and allow the Nubians' return to their homeland. After the establishment of the coalition, Saudi Arabian authorities arrested and detained the 10 Nubian men on the morning of the planned annual event in remembrance of Nubian soldiers who fought in the 6 October 1973 war. The event has taken place in previous years in Saudi Arabia without any reprisals against the community.

The ten detained Egyptian Nubian men are: Adel Ibrahim Faqir (Head of the Nubian community in Riyadh, 65 years old), Dr. Farjallah Ahmed Youssef (Former Head of the Nubian community in Riyadh), Jamal Abdullah Masri (President of Dhamit Nubian Village Association in Riyadh), Mohamed Fathallah Gomaa (37 years old), Sayyed Hashem Shater, Ali Gomaa Ali Bahr (37 years old), Saleh Gomaa Ahmed, Abdulsalam Gomaa Ali Bahr (43 years old), Abdullah Gomaa Ali and Wael Ahmed Hassan Ishaq (member of Thomas Nubian Village Association, 53 years old).

In 2017, the Egyptian authorities arrested 25 Nubian activists after the police violently dispersed their peaceful protest in Aswan governorate on 3 September 2017. They were later released and all charges dropped, noting that [Gamal Sorour](#), one of the activists, died in custody. Amnesty International documented the continued harassment of Nubian rights activists through National Security Agency (NSA) including through summons for coercive questioning without judicial orders in 2021.

In addition, the SCC routinely conducts trials that have been assessed as being grossly unfair and leading to harsh sentences including prison sentences up to 20 years to be followed by equally long travel bans, and going up to the death penalty, and has been considered to be a politicized tool to [repress dissidents](#).

Amnesty International is [calling](#) on the Saudi Arabian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience detained solely for peacefully demanding reforms or celebrating their heritage. Those imprisoned include in addition to the 10 Egyptian Nubian men, [Mohammed al-Bajadi](#), founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA) and prominent human rights defender; and [Salman al-Awda](#), a reformist cleric who faces a death sentence for expressing his opinion in a tweet.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 4 JANUARY 2022

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUNS: Adel Ibrahim Faqir, Dr. Farjallah Ahmed Youssef, Jamal Abdullah Masri, Mohamed Fathallah Gomaa, Sayyed Hashem Shater, Ali Gomaa Ali Bahr, Saleh Gomaa Ahmed, Abdulsalam Gomaa Ali Bahr, Abdullah Gomaa Ali and Wael Ahmed Hassan Ishaq (**All men - he/his/him**)