

# URGENT ACTION

## MAN SENTENCED TO DEATH OVER TWITTER POSTS

On 9 July, the Specialized Criminal Court sentenced 54-year-old retired teacher Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi to death for his peaceful online activity on Twitter and YouTube. The charge sheet cited several tweets based on which Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi was convicted, including posts in which he criticized the Saudi King and Crown Prince and Saudi's foreign policy, called for the release of detained religious clerics, and protested increased prices. The death sentence against Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi, who has a total of just 10 followers on both of his anonymous Twitter accounts is a marked escalation in the kingdom's crackdown on any form of dissent. Amnesty International calls on Saudi authorities to quash Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi's conviction and release him immediately and unconditionally.

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

**Waleed Mohammed Al Smani**

Minister of Justice

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Postal Code 11472

P.O.Box 7775

Email: [minister-office@moj.gov.sa](mailto:minister-office@moj.gov.sa)

Your Excellency,

I am alarmed to learn that, on 9 July, the Specialized Criminal Court sentenced 54-year-old Saudi retired teacher **Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi** to death on trumped-up terrorism-related charges solely to his peaceful online activity on Twitter and YouTube.

According to his brother, Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi was arrested on 11 June 2022 by State Security forces as he sat with his wife and children in front of their house in al-Nawwariyyah neighbourhood in the city of Mecca. He was kept in solitary confinement in Dhahban prison near the city of Jeddah for four months, during which he was not allowed to contact his family or access a lawyer. Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi was allowed to contact his family only when he was moved to al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh, about four months after he was arrested.

During questioning, interrogators asked Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi about his political opinions and his views on other imprisoned Saudi nationals, including religious clerics Salman al-Awda and Awad al-Qarni, both of whom were detained in 2017 and face the death penalty for their political views.

According to the verdict and charges sheet reviewed by Amnesty International, Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi was convicted under articles 30, 34, 43 and 44 of Saudi's counterterrorism law including for posts in which he criticized the Saudi King and Crown Prince and Saudi's foreign policy, called for the release of detained religious clerics, and protested increased prices, all of which are views protected under his right to freedom of expression. He is not accused of any violent crime.

**I urge you to ensure that Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi is released immediately and unconditionally, and that his conviction and sentence are quashed. Pending his release, we urge you to ensure his access to the adequate medical care he requires.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohammad bin Nasser Al-Ghamdi's brother, Dr Saeed bin Nasser al-Ghamdi, is an Islamic scholar and government critic living in self-imposed exile in the United Kingdom. He told Amnesty International that he believes that his brother's death sentence was a reprisal for his activism.

Over the past two years, Amnesty International has documented an escalating crackdown in Saudi Arabia against individuals using social media and the internet to voice their opinions, which the death sentence against Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi - who has a total of just 10 followers on both of his anonymous Twitter accounts - also shows.

The Specialized Criminal Court has used vague provisions under the anti-cybercrime and counterterrorism laws which equate peaceful expression and online activity with "terrorism" to prosecute these individuals.

Saudi Arabia is one of the world's top executioners. In 2022, the kingdom executed 196 people, the highest annual number of executions that Amnesty International has recorded in the country in the last 30 years. This number is three times higher than the number of executions carried out in 2021 and at least seven times higher than 2020. According to Amnesty International's documentation, Saudi Arabia has executed at least 94 people so far this year.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. As of today 112, countries have abolished the death penalty for all crimes and more than two thirds in total are abolitionist in law or practice.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** English, Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 27 October 2023

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

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi (he/ him)