

URGENT ACTION

BRITISH NATIONAL SENTENCED TO 8 YEARS IN PRISON

On 12 May 2025, Saudi Arabia's terrorism court, the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), sentenced British national Ahmed al-Doush to 10 years in prison. On 23 June 2025, his sentence was shortened to eight years on appeal. Saudi authorities arrested Ahmed al-Doush, a senior business analyst with Bank of America, on 31 August 2024 at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh as he was returning to the UK, where he resides, after visiting Saudi Arabia with his wife and children. In his extensive interrogations, questions revolved around past social media posts and his alleged association with a Saudi critic in exile, with whom he has no relationship beyond knowing his son. He has faced multiple violations of his fair trial rights.

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

Walid bin Mohammad AISama'ani
Minister of Justice
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
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Email: 1950@moj.gov.sa

Your Excellency,

I am deeply concerned about the SCC's sentencing of British national Ahmed al-Doush to eight years in prison. He has been subjected to multiple violations of his fair trial rights. He is currently held in al-Hair Prison in the capital Riyadh. Ahmed al-Doush was detained at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh on 31 August 2024 when he was travelling back home to the UK with his wife and their three children after a visit to Saudi Arabia.

Ahmed al-Doush has only been allowed restricted communication with his family. He told his wife in April that he was instructed by prison authorities to only check in with her and the children during the calls, and that if he discussed anything about his conditions of detention, health or legal proceedings and charges against him, that the call would be terminated and there would be punishment.

Saudi authorities have not shared court documents, including charges and the basis for conviction, with his family or British consular officials. During his first hearing before a judge in the week of 27 January 2025, five months after his arrest, Ahmed al-Doush was told that charges would be issued against him for using social media to spread fake, untrue and damaging news against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and that he was accused of having a relationship with an individual who threatened the Kingdom's national security. Based on the questions asked during extensive interrogations by Saudi authorities, his family believes these accusations may relate to old social media activity and an alleged association with a Saudi critic in exile with whom Ahmed al-Doush has no relationship beyond knowing his son.

Amnesty International has documented the Saudi authorities' increasing crackdown on freedom of expression, targeting both citizens and foreign nationals, many of whom have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

The Saudi authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Ahmed al-Doush, if he is detained solely for exercising his human rights. Until then, they must prevent further violations of his fair trial rights and ensure he has regular access to his family and legal representation.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmed al-Doush has had multiple trial hearings. He was assigned a court-appointed lawyer at his first hearing on 27 January 2025, but he is not permitted regular communication with him. As a result of restrictions by prison authorities to what he can share with his wife during his phone calls with her, which he communicated to her in April 2025, she has not received detailed information about his court proceedings, including details regarding the basis for his conviction, or the charges or evidence against him, nor updates on prison conditions or his health.

The SCC sentenced Ahmed al-Doush to 10 years in prison on 12 May 2025. The sentence was reduced to eight years in prison at an appeal hearing on 23 June 2025. Ahmed al-Doush was summoned without notice to the appeal hearing where the judge and his lawyer in Saudi Arabia were present. The judge informed him that his conviction was confirmed and that his sentence was reduced from 10 years to 8 years. The UK government, Ahmed al-Doush's family and his lawyer in the United Kingdom have not received information on his charges or the basis of his conviction.

Ahmed al-Doush's charges appear to be expression-related. Ahmed al-Doush was subjected to extensive interrogation without a lawyer present and before being informed of the charges against him. During interrogations, he said to his family that he was told that if not for his social media activity, he would be home with his family. Notably, his X account has only 37 followers and a total of four posts. In his first hearing, a judge told him that charges would be issued for using social media to spread fake, untrue and damaging news against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and that he was accused of having a relationship with an individual who threatened the Kingdom's national security.

The SCC has routinely used vague provisions under the anti-cybercrime and counter-terror laws equating peaceful expression with "terrorism". Amnesty International has documented how every stage of the SCC judicial process is tainted by human rights violations.

For two and a half months after his arrest on 31 August 2024, Ahmed al-Doush's family was denied any communication with him. They were also not given information about his situation or the reason for his arrest. His wife and children were left in the dark about his well-being, his conditions of detention and whether and when he might be allowed to return home. He was also denied consular access to UK government representatives during this time, severely hindering the UK government and his family's ability to gather information about him, his detention and steps they might take to facilitate his release. It wasn't until 17 November 2024 that Ahmed al-Doush was allowed a call to his wife. He was then permitted weekly phone calls with his family. However, in January, these calls were interrupted and have now become sporadic. He later told his family that his communication with them was restricted by the authorities as punishment for asking his wife during a call about people that had recently been released in Saudi Arabia.

Since his arrest, Ahmed al-Doush has been permitted multiple consular visits from the British embassy in Riyadh, with the first consular visit on 21 November 2025, nearly three months after his arrest. Ahead of the visit, the UK government did not share any information known about his detention, status or well-being with his family, claiming this was on the grounds of data protection.

Since 2013, Amnesty International has documented the cases of 86 individuals prosecuted solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Of those, 40 were prosecuted for legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression on social media. Amnesty International is aware that the real number of such prosecutions is likely much higher. Legal proceedings in these cases fall far short of international fair trial standards. Individuals are often held incommunicado without charge, in solitary confinement and denied access to lawyers or the courts to challenge the lawfulness of their detention.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic and English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 7 December 2025.

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Ahmed al-Doush (he/him).

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/9318/2025/en/>.