

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 23/009/2003

UA 301/03

Possible prisoner of conscience/Torture and ill-treatment
Incommunicado detention

24 October 2003

SAUDI ARABIA **Um Sa'ud (f), aged 60, Saudi Arabian national and at least 82 others**

Possible prisoner of conscience Um Sa'ud, is being held in *al-Malaz* prison in Riyadh. She was allegedly beaten and ill-treated at the time of her arrest by security forces. Um Sa'ud and at least 82 other possible prisoners of conscience, are not only at risk of torture and ill-treatment, but may be held solely for the non-violent expression of their conscientiously held beliefs.

Um Sa'ud is one of three women who were arrested along with over 250 men, during a protest in the *al-U'laya* district of Riyadh on 14 October. The protestors were calling for political reform and the release of political prisoners. Um Sa'ud was said to have carried the picture of her son, Sa'ud al-Mutayri, who is believed to have died in *al-Ha'ir* prison during a fire on the 15 September. Um Sa'ud was apparently calling for her son's body to be returned to his family.

The authorities are said to have allowed Um Sa'ud's daughters to visit her. Most of the other detainees, however, are being held in incommunicado detention, where they are at risk of torture and ill-treatment. According to the Ministry of Interior, 271 people were arrested following the demonstrations on 14 October. Of these 188 have been released but 83 others, including Um Sa'ud and two other women, are being interrogated and will be referred for trial.

Further protests took place on 23 October, in various cities including Jeddah, Dammam and Ha'il. Some of the protestors are said to have been injured whilst being arrested even though they were reportedly being non-violent.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Anti-government demonstrations are not allowed in Saudi Arabia. Critics of the state are often at risk of indefinite detention without charge or trial. They are also often ill-treated or tortured. Defendants do not have the right to formal representation by a lawyer and in many cases they and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Due to the secrecy of the Saudi Arabian justice system, trials are often held behind closed doors. In the rare instances when individuals are charged and brought to trial, the proceedings invariably fail to meet the most elementary standards of fairness.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Arabic or your own language:

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Um Sa'ud and at least 82 others who were arrested on 14 October 2003 if they are held solely for demonstrating peacefully;
- asking the authorities to ensure that all detainees are protected from torture and ill-treatment and given regular access to family lawyers and medical attention if necessary;
- calling for anyone charged with a recognizably criminal offence to be given a prompt and fair trial.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin >Abdul >Aziz,
Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior
P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road,
Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegram: **Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**
Fax: **+ 966 1 403 1185 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)**
Telex: **404416**
Salutation: **Your Royal Highness**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin >Abdul >Aziz Al-Saud,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Nasseriya Street,
Riyadh 11124, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegram: **Foreign Affairs Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**
Fax: **+ 966 1 403 0159 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)**
Telex: **405000**
Salutation: **Your Royal Highness**

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr. >Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice
University Street,
Riyadh 11137, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegram: **Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**
Fax: **+ 966 1 401 1741**
Telex: **405 980 MINJUS SJ**
Salutation: **Your Excellency**

King and Prime Minister

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines

His Majesty King Fahd bin >Abdul >Aziz Al-Saud,
Office of H.M. The King, Royal Court,
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegram: **King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**
Salutation: **Your Majesty**

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 5 December 2003.