

# URGENT ACTION

**ACTIVIST SENTENCED TO EIGHT YEARS FOR WRITING**  
**Saudi Arabian activist Abdulaziz al-Sunaidi was sentenced by the counter-terrorism court on 13 October to eight years in prison followed by an eight-year travel ban mainly for posting on Twitter. He was denied access to a lawyer throughout his detention and trial. He is a prisoner of conscience.**

Activist **Abdulaziz Abdulatif al-Sunaidi** was sentenced on 13 October to eight years in prison followed by an eight-year travel ban, and a fine of 50,000 Saudi Arabian riyals (about US\$13,300) by the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC, the counter-terrorism court) in the capital Riyadh. He has appealed the decision. Abdulaziz Abdulatif al-Sunaidi is also a supporting member of the independent human rights organization, Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA).

Throughout his detention, interrogation and trial Abdulaziz al-Sunaidi was denied access to a lawyer. He has been found guilty of among other things violating Article 6 of the Anti-Cyber Crime Law and convicted of offences including insulting the King, interfering in affairs that do not concern him, spreading chaos, inciting public opinion and stirring up sedition through his tweets, signing a statement that called for demonstrations, disrespecting the judicial authorities, supporting and sympathising with the banned organisation ACPRA, and re-tweeting tweets that were deemed offensive by the authorities.

Abdulaziz al-Sunaidi was arrested on 8 February 2015 by officers of the Criminal Investigation Department in civilian clothes at a petrol station in the central province of al-Qassim and was taken to al-Shamasyah police station. He was questioned over his tweets and some statements he had signed, and was then moved to Buraydah prison in al-Qassim. In July, he was transferred to the city of Jeddah to attend his first court hearing before the SCC. In September he was moved to al-Malaz prison in Riyadh, where he is currently serving his sentence.

**Please write immediately in English, Arabic or your own language:**

- Calling on the authorities to release Abdulaziz al-Sunaidi immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for exercising his rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
- Urging them to ensure that Abdulaziz al-Sunaidi's conviction and prison sentence are quashed.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 DECEMBER 2015 TO:**

King and Prime Minister

His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud  
 The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques  
 Office of His Majesty the King  
 Royal Court, Riyadh  
 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
 Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior)  
 +966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)  
 Twitter: @KingSalman  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

Minister of Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud  
 Minister of Interior  
 Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,  
 Airport Road, Riyadh 11134  
 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
 Fax: +966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**And copies to:**

President, Human Rights Commission  
 Bandar Mohammed 'Abdullah al-Aiban  
 Human Rights Commission  
 PO Box 58889, Riyadh 11515  
 King Fahd Road  
 Building No. 3, Riyadh  
 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
 Fax: +966 11 418 5101

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the new counter-terror law came into force in February 2014, the Saudi Arabian authorities have used it to detain, imprison and sentence human rights activists and peaceful dissidents by putting them on trial at the SCC, a special security and counter-terrorism court whose jurisdiction and procedures are unspecified. Some human rights defenders have had their trials reopen under the new counter-terror law at the SCC, years after they had been sentenced by other courts and under other laws, or while serving their sentences on similar charges. Most human rights defenders have refused to recognize the legitimacy of the SCC.

Since 2012, the Saudi Arabian authorities have been persecuting civil society activists and human rights defenders, including ACPRA members, with complete impunity, using both the courts and extrajudicial means such as the imposition of travel bans. ACPRA members bore the brunt of this persecution. Eight of the organisation's founding members are currently in prison either serving their sentence or awaiting the outcome of their retrial before the counter-terror court. Only two members remain at liberty, pending the outcome of their ongoing trials in front of the same court. Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani, Dr Suliaman al-Rashudi, Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder, Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid, Fowzan al-Harbi, Mohammed al-Bajad and Omar al-Sa'id are currently serving prison sentences for up to 15 years, to be followed by a travel ban of equal duration for their peaceful activism. Abdulaziz al-Shubaili and Issa al-Hamid are still free pending the outcome of their trials. Saleh al-Ashan has been detained since April 2012 without any charge or trial. In March 2013 the court also ordered the disbanding of ACPRA, confiscation of its property and the closure of its social media accounts.

Other activists persecuted by the authorities include human rights defender Waleed Abu al-Khair, who was arrested on 15 April 2014 after a hearing before the SCC. He is now serving a 15-year prison sentence, to be followed by 15-year travel ban and a fine, after the court found him guilty of "disobeying the ruler and seeking to remove his legitimacy", "insulting the judiciary and questioning the integrity of judges", "setting up an unlicensed organization", "harming the reputation of the state by communicating with international organizations" and "preparing, storing and sending information that harms public order" (see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/1546/2015/en/>). Similarly, Fadhel Maki al-Manasif was sentenced by the SCC on 17 April 2014 to 15 years' imprisonment, to be followed by a 15-year travel ban, and a fine of 100,000 riyals (about US\$26,600). The charges are related to his activism and his reporting and documentation of discrimination against the country's Shi'a Muslim population. He said he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated in detention (see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE23/008/2014/en/>).

Dr Zuhair Kutbi, a prominent Saudi Arabian writer, commentator and critic, was taken from his home in the city of Mecca on 15 July 2015 by members of the security forces. He was beaten during arrest and has been held in three different places, where he was interrogated. He has not yet been charged. Amnesty International believes it is likely that he was arrested because of comments he had made on 25 June 2015 on the TV show *Fi al-Samim* (To the Point), on the Rotana Khalijia satellite channel, in which he criticized political repression in Saudi Arabia and argued for reforms including transforming the country's political system into a constitutional monarchy (see UA 188/15, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/0017/2015/en/>).

Name: Abdulaziz al-Sunaidi  
Gender m/f: m

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