

Appeal leaflets (2)

AI Index: MDE 23/06/00
Saudi Arabia

Muhammad al-Hayek

Death in custody

Every day people in Saudi Arabia suffer violations of their basic human rights. Their suffering is perpetuated and hidden by a system based on secrecy and fear, and is largely ignored by the world's governments.

Anyone who dares voice dissent is likely to be imprisoned. Women face systemic discrimination. Anyone not in a position of influence is at risk of arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly members of religious minorities and those deemed to have broken the country's strict moral codes.

People are arrested with little or no explanation. They are denied access to a lawyer. They are tortured and ill-treated. They are convicted after secret and summary trials, sometimes solely on the basis of confessions extracted under duress. They face punishments including execution, amputation and flogging and in all cases have no meaningful right of appeal.

The Saudi Arabian government refuses to allow outside scrutiny of its human rights record and has ignored Amnesty International's many requests for information, constructive dialogue or implementation of reforms that would protect human rights.

Amnesty International is stepping up the pressure. It is issuing a series of documents to highlight the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia and to demand action from the authorities and the international community to put an end to the secrecy and suffering in Saudi Arabia. Please join us!
Your help is needed.

Muhammad al-Hayek

Muhammad al-Hayek, a 29-year-old Saudi Arabian, was arrested in 1996 and detained for more than two years without charge or trial. He died in June 1998 at the headquarters of al-Mabahith al-'Ammah (General Investigations) in al-Dammam in circumstances that suggest that torture may have been a contributory factor. Relatives were only informed of his death the following month, on 20 July, by members of al-Mabahith al-'Ammah. The family was refused permission to collect Muhammad al-Hayek's body and was told that it had already been buried at an undisclosed location.

To Amnesty International's knowledge an official investigation has not been conducted into the cause of Muhammad al-Hayek's death. His relatives have never been provided with an explanation.

The reason for Muhammad al-Hayek's arrest is unclear, but is believed to be connected to his religious practices. Members of the Shi'a Muslim community in Saudi Arabia, estimated at between 7 and 10 per cent of the population, suffer systematic political, social, cultural as well as religious discrimination. Shi'a Muslims are prevented by fear of prosecution from practising freely their faith.

Police brutality, torture and ill-treatment in many police stations, prisons and detention centres continue to be commonplace in Saudi Arabia, despite the country's accession to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in September 1997.

What you can do

Please write, calling for an investigation into
Muhammad al-Hayek's death in custody.

Send your letters to:

His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul 'Aziz,
Office of H.M. The King,
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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