

# URGENT ACTION

## TWO QATARI LAWYERS ARBITRARILY DETAINED

Following protests expressing grievance at the recently passed Shura Council election law which discriminates against members of the Al Murra tribe, two Qatari lawyers, brothers Hazza and Rashed bin Ali Abu Shurayda al-Marri, have been held in solitary confinement since their arbitrary detention in August 2021. This amounts to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. They must be immediately released.

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

**H.E. Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani**

Prime Minister and Minister of Interior

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Your Excellency,

*Qatari brothers **Hazza and Rashed bin Ali Abu Shurayda al-Marri**, both lawyers belonging to the Al Murra tribe, have been detained in solitary confinement since their arrest over seven months ago.*

*In July 2021, the Emir – Qatar’s Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani - ratified a law paving the way for the first legislative elections of the Shura Council. In early August 2021, members of tribes, mainly the al-Murra tribe, protested against their exclusion from the Shura Council elections. Hazza al-Marri took part in the protests, and on 8 August 2021 he tweeted a video-recorded message addressed to the Emir criticizing the law. On 10 August 2021, members of the Criminal Investigation Department arrested Hazza al-Marri at his home. His brother Rashed al-Marri went to the Public Prosecution offices to enquire about the reasons for Hazza al-Marri’s arrest and requested access to his brother as his legal representative. He was told that he would have to submit the request in writing, which he did. Rashed al-Marri was then summoned to appear before the Public Prosecution on 11 August 2021, where he was immediately detained. The two men were initially held by the cybercrime department until 22 August 2021. They were then moved to a State Security detention facility in the Fereej Bin Omran area of Doha, the capital, where they remained until the end of December 2021 before their transfer to another State Security detention facility near the Industrial area in Doha, where they continue to be held in solitary confinement. The brothers are granted family visits and calls twice a week.*

*The two men have appeared three times before a judge in sessions that took place behind closed doors. During the first one, on 26 January 2022, the judge appointed a defence lawyer without granting them the option to appoint a lawyer of their own choosing. Two other brief sessions took place on 22 February and 8 March.*

***I urge you to immediately release Hazza bin Ali Abu Shurayda al-Marri and Rashed bin Ali Abu Shurayda al-Marri unless they are promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence, in accordance with international law and standards. Pending their release, they must have immediate access to lawyers of their choice and any medical attention they may require.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 29 July 2021 the Emir ratified Law No. (6) of 2021 regarding the procedures for the election of the Shura Council. The election plans were first approved when the permanent written constitution was adopted following a 2003 referendum. The new electoral law divides Qatari nationals into three categories: 1) Citizens aged 18 and over, and whose grandfather was born in Qatar, can vote in districts in which their tribe or family reside. They can also register their candidature for the Shura Council as long as they are aged 30 or over. 2) Citizens who have acquired the Qatari nationality - provided that their grandfather is Qatari and born in Qatar, can vote in districts in which their tribe or family reside. They cannot register their candidature for the Shura Council 3) Naturalized Qatari citizens do not have the right to vote nor to be candidates for the Shura Council.

Protests of tribal members affected by the exclusion, mainly from the Al Murra tribe, erupted near Doha around 7 August 2021. On 8 August 2021, the Ministry of Interior stated that seven men were arrested and referred to the Public Prosecution, accused of “using social media to spread false news and stir up racial and tribal strife”.

On 11 August 2021, following talks between the tribes' elders and the authorities, further protests were called off. Al Murra members said that the Emir had promised to consider protesters' demands.

Arrests continued to take place throughout August and September 2021. Many were released upon signing a pledge, promising not to speak out about their detention and to stop criticizing the new law or calling for their rights. Hazza and Rashed bin Ali Abu Shurayda al-Marri refused to sign the pledge.

The Al Murra tribe is one of the largest tribes in eastern Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Its members have long faced severe discrimination and been deprived from access to education, employment, and health care. In 2004 and 2005 the entire Ghufraan clan, a branch of the Al Murra tribe, were stripped of citizenship, accused of holding Saudi nationality in secret (Qatar does not recognize dual nationality), after some of its senior members were accused of involvement in a counter-coup after Sheikh Hamad – the current Emir's father - deposed his father in a bloodless coup in 1995. Over 5,000 people were affected, but the measure was eventually reversed for all but a small number believed to have been directly involved in the plot.

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

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 25 May 2022**

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

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Hazza bin Ali Abu Shurayda al-Marri [he/him] Rashed bin Ali Abu Shurayda al-Marri [he/him]