

# URGENT ACTION

## SAUDI ARABIAN ACTIVIST DETAINED AFTER DEPORTATION

**Saudi Arabian human rights defender Mohammad al-Otaibi has been detained in Saudi Arabia since 25 May after he was deported from Qatar. He was travelling to Norway where he had been granted asylum. He is a prisoner of conscience.**

On 24 May, at about 8pm, **Mohammad al-Otaibi** and his wife Salwa al-Shehri were attempting to board a flight to Norway, where they had been granted refugee status, but were prevented from travelling by Qatari officials at Doha airport. After checking in, airport officials told Mohammad al-Otaibi that he would be allowed to leave Qatar only to travel to Saudi Arabia.

At around 10:30pm, Mohammad al-Otaibi and his wife left Doha airport with their luggage. Around 30 minutes later, he received a call from immigration officials asking him to return to the airport so they could resolve the travel issue. However, upon arrival, he was detained by State Security officials and taken to an unknown location. On 25 May, at approximately 1am, an official believed to be from State Security called Salwa al-Shehri asking her to prepare her husband's travel documents, and soon after these were collected from where she was staying.

Later that day, Mohammad al-Otaibi's brother went to the State Security headquarters in Doha and was told that his brother was being held there, and that he should come back in three days. On 28 May, Salwa al-Shehri called State Security who informed her that he had been deported to Saudi Arabia. After checking his travel record online, she found that he had left Qatar to Saudi Arabia via the Salwa border on 25 May at 3.03am, just hours after his detention at Doha airport. On 28 May, Mohammad al-Otaibi called his other brother and told him that he is being held in al-Dammam prison, in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. Since then, he has not called his family again.

Mohammad al-Otaibi has been on trial since 30 October 2016, on charges stemming from his peaceful activism. His next hearing is scheduled for 12 July.

### 1) TAKE ACTION

**Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:**

- Calling on the Saudi Arabian authorities to release Mohammad al-Otaibi immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience being held solely in relation to the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Urging them to ensure he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and granted regular access to his family and a lawyer of his choice;
- Urging them to allow him and his wife to travel freely to Norway, for which they have valid travel documents.

### Contact these two officials by 14 July, 2017:

King and Prime Minister  
His Majesty 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**

Ambassador Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud,  
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia  
601 New Hampshire Ave. NW  
Washington DC 20037  
Fax: 1 202 944 5983  
Phone: 1 202 342 3800  
Email: [info@saudiembassy.net](mailto:info@saudiembassy.net)  
**Salutation: Dear Ambassador**

### 2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 124.17*

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**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohammad al-Otaibi arrived in Qatar in February 2017, after the Saudi Arabian authorities lifted a travel ban against him for a previous conviction stemming from his human rights work. While in Doha, the Norwegian authorities accepted him and his wife for resettlement as refugees and issued them 90-day visas in order to enter Norway. He was due to leave for Oslo with his wife at 1am on 25 May.

Mohammad al-Otaibi and Abdullah al-Attawi, both co-founders of the Union for Human Rights, were brought to trial before the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), a counter-terror court set up to look into security related offences, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital, on 30 October 2016. Both men were presented with a list of charges that includes, among others, "participating in setting up an organization and announcing it before getting an authorization"; "dividing national unity, spreading chaos and inciting public opinion by preparing, drafting and publishing statements that are harmful to the reputation of the Kingdom and its judicial and security institutions"; and "publishing information about their interrogations despite signing pledges to refrain from doing so".

Mohammad al-Otaibi was also accused of "publishing and retweeting tweets that are offensive to the Kingdom, the ruler and Arab countries"; "inciting international organizations against the Kingdom"; "adopting the constitutional monarchy project"; "participating in two media interviews"; and "inciting people to protest".

In March 2013, Abdullah Modhi al-Attawi, Mohammad Aeid al-Otaibi, Abdullah Faisal al-Harbi and Mohammad Abdullah al-Otaibi set up an independent human rights organization called Union for Human Rights. The NGO's founding statement lists among its aims: "to spread and defend the culture of human rights, enforce its principles and values, and promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights", and "to reinforce the role of women in political participation and social activities in accordance with Islamic Sharia [law]". It also aims "to abolish punitive death penalties" and "to achieve its objectives by all legally and morally legitimate means by resorting to the judiciary when deemed necessary and by activating the rule of law".

The following month, the four men were called for interrogations after they formally informed the authorities about founding the Union for Human Rights and requested a licence. The Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution (BIP) summoned all four men for interrogations and they were made to sign pledges to close down the organization. However the BIP accused Mohammad al-Otaibi and Abdullah al-Attawi of resuming their activism and opened a new case against them which began at the SCC on 30 November 2016.

Name: Mohammad al-Otaibi  
Gender m/f: m

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