

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST DETAINED INCOMMUNICADO FOR 17 DAYS

Saudi Arabian human rights defender Ali Shaaban has been detained incommunicado since 15 May, raising fears that he might be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. He may be a prisoner of conscience.

On 15 May, at around 11.30pm, 34 year old Saudi Arabian accountant and blogger, **Ali Ahmad Shaaban**, was arrested as he was buying milk for his daughter at a pharmacy in Qatif, in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. His 20 month old daughter, Dina, was with him at the time of his arrest. Ali Shaaban was taken to a police station in the North of Qatif. Since then, it is believed that he has been transferred to al-Dammam General prison, also in the Eastern Province. On the night of his arrest he was allowed one phone call to his brother. During the brief call, he asked his brother to come to the prison to pick up his young daughter. Ali Shaaban has since been held incommunicado with no access to a lawyer or any member of his family.

Ali Shaaban is a blogger and environmental activist who is a vocal critic against religious extremism and a strong supporter of environmental sustainability in Saudi Arabia. He has blogged against sea-filling projects and in October 2013 he went on a 16-day hunger strike in protest of the destruction of Mangroves forests in Qatif. He is also known for his support of women's rights and other detained human rights defenders such as Waleed Abu al-Khair.

The reasons for Ali Shaaban's arrest remain unclear. However, activists told Amnesty International that they believe that his arrest might have been triggered by his recent Facebook posts in solidarity with al-Awwamiya's residents in the Eastern Province who are caught in the ongoing fighting between government forces and armed men refusing to leave the area. If so, Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

1) TAKE ACTION

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

- Expressing concern that Ali Shaaban may have been detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression and association, in which case he should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging them to ensure that, pending his release, he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and is granted prompt and regular access to his family and a lawyer of his choosing;
- Asking them what charges he faces and that his due process rights are upheld and that any legal proceedings against him conform to international fair trial standards.

Contact these two officials by 13 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
5/22/2017
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 125.17*

Here's why it is so important to report your actions: we record the actions taken on each case—letters, emails, calls and tweets—and use that information in our advocacy.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The systematic repression of writers, journalists and human rights defenders is part of a larger campaign to silence all forms of criticism that have revealed, directly or indirectly, human rights violations committed by the authorities. People targeted have included the country's leading human rights defenders, such as women's rights activists, relatives of victims of human rights violations, dissident Saudi Arabian Shi'a Muslims who have criticized discrimination against their community and anyone who communicates with international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International.

The Saudi Arabian authorities have systematically repressed all forms of peaceful dissent and activism since 2012 by targeting activists and dissidents. By early 2014, most of Saudi Arabia's prominent and independent human rights defenders had been either imprisoned or scared into silence, or had fled the country. Most of them had already been subjected to arbitrary travel bans, and had been intimidated and harassed by the security forces, particularly by the Ministry of Interior's General Directorate of Investigations, before being prosecuted and given harsh sentences. Many writers, journalists and human rights defenders have been sentenced after grossly unfair trials by the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), a special security and counter-terrorism court whose jurisdiction and procedures are unspecified, including Alaa Brinji and Nazeer al-Majed.

On 24 March 2016, Saudi Arabian journalist Alaa Brinji was sentenced by the SCC to five years in prison to be followed by an eight year travel ban after he was found guilty of, among other things, "insulting the rulers", "inciting public opinion", "ridiculing Islamic religious figures", "violating Article 6 of the Anti-Cyber Crime Law" and "accusing security officers of killing protestors in Awamiyya". The charges relate to his posts on Twitter, some of which call for freedom of religion and support the "women to drive" movement, human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience. See Amnesty International's Press release: Journalist sentenced to five years in prison for tweets latest victim of crackdown, 25 March 2016: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2016/03/saudi-arabia-journalist-sentenced-to-five-years-in-prison-for-tweets-latest-victim-of-ruthless-crackdown/>

On 18 January, Nazeer al-Majed, Saudi Arabian technician, writer and father of two was sentenced by the SCC to seven years in prison, to be followed by a seven-year travel ban. He was convicted of "breaking allegiance to the ruler", and among other things, "participating in protests and writing articles opposing the policy of the state" and "communicating with media". Nazeer al-Majed, was previously arrested on 17 April 2011, days after he published an article titled "I protest therefore I am a [good] human" (ana ahtajj izan ana adami). In the article, Nazeer al-Majed reasoned that dialogue could only take place between two equal sides and that only by protesting in the streets could people be on a par with the state, which would in turn lead to an effective dialogue. Prior to his arrest, Nazeer al-Majed published articles on philosophical, social and political issues in Arabic in print media and online. See Amnesty International's Urgent Action: Prisoner of conscience held incommunicado, 10 February 2017: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/5655/2017/en/>

Name: Ali Ahmad Shaaban
Gender m/f: m

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