

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 23/022/2007

13 June 2007

UA 147/07

Incommunicado detention/fear of torture or ill-treatment/medical concern

SAUDI ARABIA

Dr Sa'id bin Zu'air (m)

---

Former university professor Dr Sa'id Bin Zu'air, a critic of the government, was arrested in the capital, Riyadh, on 6 June. He is held incommunicado at an unconfirmed location and is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. He apparently suffers from rheumatism and low blood pressure, and was reportedly not allowed to bring his medicine when he was arrested.

Dr Sa'id Bin Zu'air was arrested by members of the General Investigation (*al-Mabahith al-'Amma*) at a police checkpoint on the road into Riyadh. He had been on his way home from Mecca with his son Mubarek.

The authorities have reportedly claimed that he was arrested for collecting money to "help terrorism". However, other sources have argued that he may have been arrested to prevent him from taking part in broadcasts on Qatar-based *Al-Jazeera* satellite TV. He has criticised the government in previous *Al-Jazeera* broadcasts.

Dr Sa'id bin Zu'air had been arrested in 2004 in connection with criticisms of the government's approach to tackling terrorism in Saudi Arabia he made during a debate on *Al-Jazeera*, and was later convicted on vague charges that included "disobeying the country's ruler", and sentenced to five years in prison. He was released in August 2005 following a pardon by the newly enthroned King Abdullah. Dr Sa'id bin Zu'air had already been detained in 1995, and held without charge or trial for about eight years for his criticism of the government.

His sons, Sa'ad and Mubrek bin Zu'air, were arrested in 2002 and 2004 respectively after they mounted a campaign for his release, which included appearing on *Al-Jazeera*. Mubarak bin Zuair was sentenced to 10 months in prison on similar charges to those against his father, and was finally released at the beginning of 2005. Sa'ad bin Zuair was released in July 2005 after almost three years held incommunicado.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Saudi Arabian authorities regularly hold detainees incommunicado, when they are frequently tortured and otherwise ill-treated. Critics of the state are routinely detained indefinitely without charge or trial. Defendants are often denied the right to formal representation by a lawyer and in many cases they and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Due to the secrecy of the Saudi Arabian justice system, trials are invariably held behind closed doors. In the rare instances when individuals are charged and brought to trial, the proceedings invariably fail to meet the most elementary standards of fairness.

## RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic or English or your own language:

- expressing concern that Sa'id bin Sa'id Zua'ir was arrested on 6 June and is now held incommunicado, and urging the authorities to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and given regular access to his family, lawyers of his choice and any medical attention he may require;
- urging the authorities to either charge Dr Sa'id bin Zua'ir with a recognizably criminal offence and give him a fair trial or else release him immediately.

**APPEALS TO:**

King Abdullah 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

**Salutation: Your Majesty**

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
P.O. Box 2933  
Airport Road  
Riyadh 11134  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Fax: +966 1 403 1185**  
**+966 1 403 3614**

**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Nasseriya Street  
Riyadh 11124  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Fax: +966 1 403 0645**

**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 July 2007.