

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture or ill-treatment / incommunicado detention

SAUDI ARABIA

Fouad Ahmad al-Farhan (m) aged 32, owner of a small IT company

Internet blogger Fouad Ahmad al-Farhan is reportedly being held in incommunicado detention at Dhaban Prison in the city of Jeddah. He has been held for more than one month and is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. He is married with two children and his family have reportedly been told that they will not be able to visit him until 30 days from the date of his detention.

Fouad Ahmad al-Farhan, who owns a small IT company called 'Smart Info', was arrested by security agents at his office on 10 December 2007. He was later taken to his home, which was subsequently searched. The Ministry of Interior acknowledged his detention on 31 December, but the exact reason for his arrest was not specified.

Fouad Ahmad al-Farhan is believed to be held for his peaceful criticism of government policies, including detentions without charge or trial of prisoners of conscience - such as nine men who have been held since 3 February 2007. Amnesty International believes they may be detained solely for their peaceful activities in defence of human rights (See UA 27/07, MDE 23/007/2007, 5 February 2007).

Prior to his arrest Fouad Ahmad al-Farhan was reportedly warned by an official from the Interior Ministry that he was at risk of being interrogated. He believed that this would be in connection with his writings on political prisoners in his web journal.

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 high level of 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 Fouad Ahmad Al-Farhan is being held incommunicado, where he is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment;
- seeking assurances from the authorities that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment;
- calling for him to be given regular access to his family, lawyers of his choice and any medical attention he may require;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release if he is being held solely for the peaceful expression of his conscientiously held beliefs or, otherwise, for the authorities to bring Fouad Ahmad Al-Farhan to trial promptly and fairly on a recognisably criminal charge.

APPEALS TO:

His Majesty 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:

Mr Turki bin Khaled Al-Sudairy
The President
The Human Rights Commission
PO Box 58889, Riyadh 11515
King Fahad Road
Building No.373
Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 1 4612061

and 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 15 March 2008.