

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture or ill-treatment/ incommunicado detention

SAUDI ARABIA

Dr Abdullah al-Hamid (m), former professor of contemporary literature at Imam Muhammad bin Sa'ud University, Riyadh
Issa al-Hamid (m), brother of Dr Abdullah al-Hamid
Rima al-Jareesh (f)
Muhammad al-Hamli (m), husband of Rima al-Jareesh
Manal al-'Amirni (f)
Khalid al-Sa'wi (m), husband of Manal al-'Amirni
Badriya al-'Amirni (f)
'Adil al-Khalidi (m), husband of Badriya al-'Amirni
Afrah al-Fahidi (f)]
Ashwaq al-Fahidi (f)] sisters of Hani al-Fahidi
Hani al-Fahidi (m)

Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, his brother Issa al-Hamid, Rima al-Jareesh, Manal al-'Amirni, Badriya al-'Amirni, Afrah al-Fahidi and her sister Ashwaq al-Fahidi were all arrested on 19 July in connection with a demonstration held on 16 July by five of them and about 15 other women in protest against the prolonged detention without charge or trial of their relatives as suspected political opponents of the government or "terrorists". According to reports, they are being held incommunicado and may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment. Amnesty International believes that they may have been detained solely for the non-violent expression of their beliefs, and if so, would consider them to be prisoners of conscience.

All five women, Rima al-Jareesh, Manal al-'Amirni, Badriya al-'Amirni, Afrah al-Fahidi and Ashwaq al-Fahidi, are reported to have taken part in the protest which was held outside *al-Mabahith al-'Ammah* Prison in Buraida in al-Qassim region, north of the capital, Riyadh. They were all arrested by Members of *al-Mabahith al-'Ammah* (General Investigation), one of the main arresting authorities of political suspects under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior. Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and his brother Issa al-Hamid are relatives of Rima al-Jareesh and are said to have been arrested after they asked those who arrested Rima al-Jareesh to explain the reason for her arrest and to show their arrest warrant as required by the law. The women protesters, all relatives of political detainees arrested between 2003 and 2007, were calling for these detainees to be charged and given a fair trial or be released. Among these detainees is Rima al-Jareesh's husband, Muhammad al-Hamli, who has allegedly been held without charge since 2004 or 2005. He is a relative of Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, who is reported to have been given power of attorney by his family to seek clarification of his situation by the authorities. Dr Abdullah al-Hamid is believed to have sought information from the Ministry of Interior about Muhammad al-Hamli's case but received no response.

The other political detainees whose relatives have been arrested are Khalid al-Sa'wi, husband of Manal al-'Amirni, 'Adil al-Khalidi, husband of Badriya al-'Amirni, and Hani al-Fahidi, brother of Afrah and Ashwaq al-Fahidi.

Dr Abdullah al-Hamid was previously detained from 2004 to 2005 along with a number of government critics who have been campaigning for the right to freedom of expression and respect for the rights of detainees. He is one of a number of people reported recently to have called on the king to end the impunity for human rights abuses enjoyed by the Ministry of Interior.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Critics of the state and suspected political opponents of the authorities are invariably subjected to gross violations of their rights with total disregard for international human rights standards and Saudi Arabia's own

laws. Upon arrest, detainees are often subjected to lengthy incommunicado detention with all the risks of torture and ill-treatment this involves, indefinite detention without charge or trial, and denial of access to lawyers and the courts to challenge the legality of their detention. They may be released only after undertaking not to repeat what they were suspected of, even when this relates solely to the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression and association. Political trials are rare, and invariably fall far short of international human rights standards for fair trial. Defendants are, as a rule, denied legal assistance, and in many cases they and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Court hearings are often held behind closed doors. This pattern of human rights violations has been exacerbated by Saudi Arabia's pursuit of the "war on terror" policy with total disregard for international human rights standards and the rule of law, which has resulted in thousands of people being subjected to arrest and detention over the last six years. Amnesty International does not know how many are currently held, but according to reported statement by a Ministry of Interior source there are at least 3,000 political detainees currently held without charge or trial. The Ministry is also reported to have disclosed that 9,000 political detainees have been arrested since 2003.

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

- expressing concern about the arrest of Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, his brother Issa al-Hamid, Rima al-Jareesh, Manal al-'Amirni, Badriya al-'Amirni, Afrah al-Fahidi and her sister Ashwaq al-Fahidi;
- seeking assurances that they and the political detainees to whom they are related are protected from torture and given immediate and regular access to lawyers, families, and medical attention if necessary;
- asking for details of the charges against all those detained and any trial proceedings which are scheduled or have taken place;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release of all those detained if they are held solely for their support of the right of political detainees to be released or given a prompt and fair trial;
- expressing concern that Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, Issa al-Hamid, Rima al-Jareesh, Manal al-'Amirni, Badriya al-'Amirni, Afrah al-Fahidi and Ashwaq al-Fahidi may be prisoners of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

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
Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior) +966 1 403 1185
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
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
President, 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 30 August 2007.