

PUBLIC

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UA 237/07 Incommunicado detention/Fear of torture or ill-treatment/ possible prisoner of conscience

SAUDI ARABIA Mohamed Saleh Osman al-Bajadi, (m), aged 29

Mohamed Saleh Osman al-Bajadi was arrested on 4 September in Buraida in the al-Qassim region, north of the capital, Riyadh. He is held incommunicado and is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. Amnesty International believes that he may have been detained solely for the exercise of his conscientiously held beliefs and as such may be a prisoner of conscience.

Mohamed Saleh Osman al-Bajadi was arrested by the government's General Investigation service (*al-Mabahith al-'Amma*) in Buraida after they stormed his office and seized his computer and a number of CDs. Amnesty International does not know the exact reason for his arrest but it may be related to his activities as an advocate for political reform and the promotion and protection of human rights.

Mohamed Saleh Osman al-Bajadi founded the "Forum for Cultural Debates", a discussion group that meets weekly to discuss the promotion of human rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Critics of the state and suspected political opponents of the authorities are invariably subjected to 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 other ill-treatment. This practice 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, generally, 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.

The Saudi Arabian authorities regularly hold detainees incommunicado, when they are frequently tortured and otherwise ill-treated. This can last for months or years, often until a confession is obtained.

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

- expressing concern that Mohamed Saleh Osman al-Bajadi was arrested in Buraida and is held incommunicado;
- asking the authorities to ensure that Mohamed Saleh Osman al-Bajadi is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and given regular access to his families, lawyers and any medical attention he may require;
- asking why exactly he has been detained, and what if any charges he is facing, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release if he is held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to express his conscientiously held beliefs.

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 18 October 2007.