

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture or ill-treatment / Incommunicado detention /
Possible prisoner of conscience

08

SAUDI ARABIA Muhanna bin Abdul 'Aziz al-Hubail (m), aged 41

Amnesty International is concerned that Muhanna bin Abdul 'Aziz al-Hubail may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment as he is believed to be held in incommunicado detention in the city of al-Ihsa, Eastern Province. He may be detained solely for the non-violent expression of his political views and as such would be considered a prisoner of conscience.

Muhanna bin Abdul 'Aziz al-Hubail was arrested on the evening of 6 October by the main arresting authority known as the General Investigation. His arrest is said to be connected with the establishment at the beginning of October of a political group called the "National Islamic Gathering of al-Ihsa", for which he was reportedly chosen as the Secretary General. He is a well known critic of the state and has in the past been arrested and detained without charge or trial.

Following his arrest on 6 October, the Ministry of Interior is reported to have stated that Muhanna bin Abdul 'Aziz al-Hubail "violated the rules, incited sedition and appointed himself a leader of a suspicious group which aims at causing dissent, and spreading sectarianism...With this, he broke an undertaking which he made to the authorities. Legal procedures will be taken against him." Amnesty International does not have details about the "National Islamic Gathering of al-Ihsa" but some reports suggest that its aim was to "strengthen the unity of the different sections of society in al-Ihsa and the Kingdom".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Critics of the state in Saudi Arabia are often at risk of torture or ill-treatment following arrest, as they are routinely held in incommunicado detention. As a rule they are held in indefinite detention without charge or trial and are released only after undertaking not to carry out any opposition activities or criticise the state. In the rare instances when they are charged and brought to trial, the proceedings invariably fail to meet the most elementary standards of fairness. Trials in Saudi Arabia are held in secret and defendants are rarely allowed formal representation by a lawyer. In many cases defendants and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Defendants may also be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress, torture or deception.

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

- expressing concern that Muhanna bin Abdul 'Aziz al-Hubail is being held incommunicado following his arrest on 6 October 2004 in city of Al-Ihsa, Eastern Province;
- seeking assurances that he is protected from torture or other ill-treatment;
- calling for him to be given regular access to his family, lawyers and medical attention if necessary;
- expressing concern that he may be a prisoner of conscience held solely for the non-violent exercise of his political beliefs, and if this is the case calling for him to be released without delay;
- if he is held in connection with a recognizably criminal offence, ask for the charges and details of any trial proceedings against him to be made public.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz

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 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr. 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, University Street, Riyadh 11137, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: + 966 1 401 1741

Salutation: Your Excellency

King and Prime Minister, The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines

His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud
Office of H.M. The King, Royal Court, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Salutation: Your Majesty.

Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Commander of the National Guard

His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud
Royal Court, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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 19 November 2004