

URGENT ACTION

TWO SUDANESE ACTIVISTS AT RISK OF DEPORTATION

Sudanese activists Elgassim Mohamed Seed Ahmed and Elwaleed Imam Hassan Taha are at imminent risk of deportation from Saudi Arabia to Sudan, where they would be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. The two activists have been detained in Saudi Arabia without charge or trial since 21 December 2016. They are prisoners of conscience.

According to information provided to Amnesty International, **Elgassim Mohamed Seed Ahmed** and **Elwaleed Imam Hassan Taha** were called for questioning by the prison authorities on 5 June in al-Ha'ir Prison in Riyadh, the Saudi Arabian capital, where they have been detained since 21 December 2016. They were questioned in two separate cells while blindfolded and handcuffed about who sponsors their own and their family's residency in Saudi Arabia; whether they owe or are owed any debts by anyone; and whether they own property in Saudi Arabia. They were also asked to delegate a Power of Attorney to a family member in Saudi Arabia in order to manage their properties in the country. On 7 June, the passports of the two men were apparently collected from their workplace by officials believed to be from the Ministry of Interior. They have had no legal representation.

Both men had last been interrogated in March 2017, when they were told by prison authorities that they are being detained and interrogated at the behest of the Sudanese authorities. The security officers from the General Directorate of Investigations (GDI, or *al-Mabahith*) told them that they were now awaiting trial, after which they could face imprisonment or deportation to Sudan. The content of the recent questioning and ill-treatment they faced on 5 June, coupled with the collection of their passports raise fears that the authorities are preparing for their deportation to Sudan, where they would be at risk of additional arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment.

Elgassim Seed Ahmed and Elwaleed Imam have been detained without charge in al-Ha'ir Prison since their arrest on 21 December 2016. They were interrogated around eight times mostly about their social media activism following their support of the civil disobedience protest in Sudan in December 2016 on Facebook.

Please write immediately in English, Arabic or your own language:

- Calling on the Saudi Arabian authorities to release Elgassim Seed Ahmed and Elwaleed Imam immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them, in accordance with their obligations under international law, to not deport the two men to Sudan, where there is a real risk they would be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JULY 2017 TO:

King and Prime Minister
His Majesty Salman 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 Interior)
+966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)
Twitter: @KingSalman
Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Interior
His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 403 3125
Twitter: @M_Naif_Alsaud
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Human Rights Commission
Bandar Mohammed 'Abdullah al-Aiban
P.O. Box 58889, Riyadh 11515
King Fahd Road
Building No. 3, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 418 510

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz - Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in London, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 30 Charles Street, Mayfair, London, W1J 5DZ tel: 020 7917 3000 or 02079173288, fax 02079173113 email: ukemb@mofa.gov.sa complete the webform here: <http://embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/uk/EN/ContactDiplomaticMission/Pages/ContactWithDiplomaticMission.aspx>; twitter: @SaudiEmbassyUK, Salutation: Your Royal Highness **Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.** This is the second update of UA 9/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/5897/2017/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Elgassim Seed Ahmed has lived in Saudi Arabia since 1998 and Elwaleed Imam since 2013. Both men work in a supply company in Riyadh. Elgassim Seed Ahmed is the founder of a public Facebook group called 'The tragedy of the military and Kiezan governance in Sudan', which according to the family used to be critical of the Sudanese government but has -- since Elgassim Seed Ahmed's arrest -- been hacked. Elwaleed Imam is a member of the group. On 19 December 2016, both men supported on social media a day of civil disobedience in Sudan, in protest against new economic austerity measures imposed by the government.

On 21 December 2016, both men were arrested outside their workplace at about 5pm by security officers dressed in civilian clothing. They were driven to their respective homes, which were then searched by the officers. Upon arrest, the officers told Elgassim Seed Ahmed's family that they were from the Ministry of Interior's Security Division and that he would be released by midnight. They showed no arrest or search warrant to the families for either men. Both men were held incommunicado from the date of their arrest until 13 February, when their families were allowed to visit them for the first time. However, they remained in solitary confinement until 6 March when they were finally both moved to the same cell. They have had no access to legal representation since the time of their arrest.

Amnesty International has documented the detention of another Sudanese national and political activist residing in Saudi Arabia. See Amnesty International's Urgent Action: Sudanese political activist held incommunicado, 28 February 2017 (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/5779/2017/en/>). Alaa Aldin Dafalla al-Difana is a 44 year old father of six and an employee at a driving school in Mecca, western Saudi Arabia. He was arrested at around 9am on 26 December 2016 by four security force officers from the Ministry of Interior in his apartment in Mecca. They searched his home and car and confiscated his phone and documents, without an arrest or search warrant. Alaa Aldin al-Difana is a journalist, long-standing opposition activist and a member of the National Umma Party (Hizb al-Umma al-Qawmi) in Sudan, an opposition political party. Most recently, Alaa Aldin al-Difana showed his support for the November and December 2016 civil disobedience campaign in Sudan on his Facebook page. It appears that he is being detained in relation to his online activism.

Amnesty International has also documented dozens of cases and received numerous reports on the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) crackdown on activities of anti-government political activists, human rights defenders and civil society activists in 2016 and early 2017. In November 2016, at least 23 members of Sudan's political opposition parties were arrested by the NISS. These arrests were a response to sporadic protests by activists and members of the political opposition against the rise in fuel, electricity, transport, food, and medicine costs in Sudan. Political activists also called for a three-day nationwide strike in November, followed by one day in December which were widely supported. Although some were released without charge during December 2016 and early January 2017, at least 10 activists and human rights defenders still remain detained without charge, and many have been subjected to torture or other forms of ill-treatment.

Under the principles of non-refoulement Saudi Arabia is prohibited from transferring individuals to another country or jurisdiction where they would face a real risk of serious human rights violations or abuses. The principle of non-refoulement has the status of customary international law making it binding upon all states, even those who have not ratified the relevant treaties. Saudi Arabia is also prohibited, as a state party to the Convention Against Torture, from returning people to states where there are substantial grounds for believing that they would be in danger of being subjected to torture.

Further information on UA: 9/17 Index: MDE 23/6439/2017 Issue Date: 8 June 2017