

URGENT ACTION

JUVENILE OFFENDER AT RISK OF IMMINENT EXECUTION

The family of Abdulkareem al-Hawaj, a Saudi Arabian Shi'a young man sentenced to death for offences that occurred when he was 16 years old, learned that their son's sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court on 11 September. He has exhausted all his appeals and is at risk of imminent execution.

On 11 September, a court official informed the family of **Abdulkareem al-Hawaj**, who was sentenced to death on 27 July 2016 by the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in Riyadh, that the Supreme Court had upheld his death sentence for offences related to his involvement in anti-government protests. On 12 July 2017, authorities transferred him from the General Directorate of Investigations (GDI) Prison in Dammam to al-Ha'ir Prison in Riyadh, to attend a court session at the SCC appeal court. Prison authorities did not bring Abdulkareem al-Hawaj to court for his session and the court informed his legal representative that there will be no more hearings. He has exhausted all his appeals and faces execution as soon as the King ratifies his sentence, which could happen at any time.

Abdulkareem al-Hawaj was convicted of offences including "throwing two Molotov cocktails", "participating in riots that resulted in the shooting of an armoured vehicle" and using social media to share photos and videos of demonstrations in the Eastern Province and Bahrain. According to court documents, these acts were carried out in August 2012, when he was aged 16. The court appears to have based its decision solely on "confessions" which he says he was forced into making while he was held incommunicado and tortured.

Abdulkareem al-Hawaj had no access to a lawyer during pre-trial detention and interrogations; he said that he was held incommunicado in solitary confinement at the GDI prison in al-Qatif for his first five months of detention. He said that he was tortured, including being beaten by the prison guards with their hands, shoes and sticks and threatened with the death of his family, during interrogations by officers of the GDI to make him write and sign a "confession". According to court documents, he was held without charge for over two years. He denies participating in any acts that the prosecution attributes to him.

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

- Urging King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud to halt the execution of Abdulkareem al-Hawaj and commute his and all other existing death sentences;
- Calling on them to order an independent investigation into his allegation of torture and other ill-treatment;
- Reminding them that Saudi Arabia is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which strictly prohibits the use of the death penalty for crimes committed by persons below the age of 18;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 OCTOBER 2017 TO:

King and Prime Minister
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
Minister of Interior
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:
Minister of Justice
His Excellency Dr Walid bin Mohammed
bin Saleh Al-Samaani
Ministry of Justice
University Street,
PO Box 7775, Riyadh 11137
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 401 1741 / 402 031
Salutation: Your Excellency

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 209/16. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6744/2017/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to information received by Amnesty International, Abdulkareem al-Hawaj was arrested on 16 January 2014 at a security checkpoint in al-Awamiyyah, a village in the al-Qatif region of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. His family looked for Abdulkareem al-Hawaj in the police stations and prisons of al-Qatif but officials told them that he was not held in those locations. His family only learnt of his whereabouts when an official from the GDI prison in Dammam telephoned them approximately five months after his arrest and told them they were holding him and that they could now visit.

Saudi Arabia is one of the most prolific executioners in the world. So far this year it has executed at least 90 people, including 45 in the past two months. Saudi Arabia also sentences people to death, and executes them, for crimes committed when they were below 18 years of age, in violation of the country's obligations under customary international law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Since 2013, Amnesty International has recorded a spike in the use of death sentences against political dissidents in Saudi Arabia, including the Shi'a Muslim minority. On 2 January 2016, prominent Shi'a cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr was executed along with 46 other prisoners. On 11 July 2017, Yussuf Ali al-Mushaikhass, a father of two, was executed along with three other Shi'a men, for terror-related offences in connection with their participation in anti-government protests in the Eastern Province. His family was not informed of the execution in advance, only finding out about it afterwards when they saw a government statement read on TV (See further information on UA 270/16, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6748/2017/en/>).

Among those sentenced to death in relation to the protests, and in addition to Abdulkareem al-Hawaj, are Ali al-Nimr (nephew of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr), who was 17 when he was arrested, and Abdullah al-Zaher and Dawood al-Marhoon, who were 16 and 17 years old respectively when they were arrested. On 1 June 2016, 14 men were sentenced to death following a grossly unfair mass trial of 24 Saudi Arabian Shi'a Muslims. They were found guilty of violent offences related to their alleged participation in anti-government demonstrations in Saudi Arabia's Shi'a majority Eastern Province between 2011 and 2012. Court documents show that the 14 men were subjected to prolonged pre-trial detention and the men said they had been tortured and ill-treated during their interrogation to extract their "confessions". However, the judge failed to order investigations into their allegations. The SCC appears to have largely based its decision on these "confessions" (See further information on UA 180/17, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6783/2017/en/>).

The authorities repeatedly fail to abide by international standards for fair trial and UN Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty. Trials in death penalty cases are often held in secret and their proceedings are unfair and frequently summary, with no legal assistance or representation for those accused through the various stages of detention and trial. Defendants may be convicted solely on the basis of "confessions" obtained under torture or other ill-treatment. Under international human rights law, the death penalty can only be imposed for the "most serious crimes", which has been interpreted by UN experts as crimes that involve "intentional killing".

The death penalty is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty at all times, regardless of who is accused, the crime, their guilt or innocence or method of execution.

Further information on UA: 209/16 Index: MDE 23/7103/2017 Issue Date: 18 September 2017