

# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST IN ARBITRARY DETENTION

**Issa al-Nukheifi, a Saudi Arabian human rights activist, was detained again and remains in detention since 18 December. He is a prisoner of conscience and should be released immediately.**

**Issa al-Nukheifi** received a call from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on 17 December 2016 asking him to go to al-Nouzha police station in Mecca for questioning. He went to the station the following day, on 18 December 2016, and was arrested upon arrival. The Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution (BIP) interrogated Issa al-Nukheifi multiple times about his human rights activism and contact with international human rights organizations. He was interrogated in particular about his online activism, which included tweets he had sent out in support of members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA) and other detainees, as well as his role in setting up "Saudi Popular Parliament", a Twitter account set up on 10 December 2016 aimed at promoting democracy in Saudi Arabia. On 30 December, Issa al-Nukheifi was moved to Mecca General Prison where he is currently being detained.

Issa al-Nukheifi was previously arrested on 15 September 2012, three weeks after he appeared on television accusing the local authorities in Jazan, in the south-western region of Saudi Arabia, of corruption and numerous human rights violations. Issa al-Nukheifi was initially sentenced to three years in prison and a four-year travel ban on 29 April 2013 by the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh, the capital, for violating Article 6 of the Anti-Cyber Crime Law. The court also ordered that his Facebook and Twitter accounts be closed down. Upon appeal, in June 2013, his sentence was increased by eight months. Issa al-Nukheifi was released on 6 April 2016 after serving his sentence. On 18 December, eight months after his release, he was rearrested.

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

- Urging the Saudi Arabian authorities to release **Issa al-Nukeifi** immediately and conditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to ensure that pending his release, he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and is granted prompt and regular access to his family and a lawyer of his choosing;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that, while he is detained, his due process rights are upheld and that any legal proceedings against him conform to international fair trial standards.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 MARCH 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 the 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\_AISaud  
**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; email: [ukemb@mofa.gov.sa](mailto:ukemb@mofa.gov.sa) twitter: @SaudiEmbassyUK, Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 35/15. Further information: [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/3790/2016/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/3790/2016/en/)

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Issa al-Nukheifi is a human rights activist and supporter of the independent human rights organization the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), which was forcibly closed down by the Saudi Arabian authorities in March 2013. At least 12 founding and active members of the organization have since been imprisoned or are now on trial.

The authorities had previously harassed Issa al-Nukheifi for his role in exposing corruption within state institutions. Local activists claim that the authorities' treatment of Issa al-Nukheifi in 2012 is a result of his refusal to keep silent on the gross human rights violations. In 2009 Issa al-Nukheifi single-handedly documented the aftermath of the forced eviction of nearly 12,000 Saudi Arabian residents of Jazan, on the border with Yemen. He has argued that the authorities not only illegally confiscated large areas of land and property belonging to Saudi Arabian border residents, but that they sold parts of the confiscated land and embezzled large amounts of money allocated to compensate those who had been forcibly displaced since 2009. He was arrested on 15 September 2012, three weeks after he appeared on a TV channel accusing the local authorities in Jazan of corruption and numerous human rights violations.

On 29 April 2013, the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in Riyadh sentenced Issa al-Nukheifi to three years in prison and a four-year travel ban after finding him guilty of "inciting disobedience to the ruler and questioning his legitimacy"; "questioning the judiciary and the integrity of its procedures"; "ridiculing the committee of senior religious scholars"; "accusing institutions and officials for shortcomings in performing their duties towards the people"; "participating in inciting strife by calling for and coordinating protests and demonstrations"; and "preparing, storing, and sending information that harms public order". The charges were based on provisions contained in Article 6 of Saudi Arabia's Anti-Cyber Crime Law which impose up to five years' imprisonment for, among other things, "production, preparation, transmission, or storage of material impinging on public order, religious values, public morals, and privacy, through the information network or computers."

Since 2012, the Saudi Arabian authorities have been targeting civil society activists and human rights defenders, using both the courts and other administrative measures, such as the imposition of travel bans, as a means to harass, intimidate and impede their work in the defence of human rights. In recent weeks, two other human rights defenders Essam al-Koshak and Ahmed al-Mushaikhass have been detained for their human rights activism. Both remain in detention.

Further information on UA: 35/15 Index: MDE 23/5526/2017 Issue Date: 24 January 2017

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