

SAUDI ARABIA

FIVE ACTIVISTS FACE THE DEATH PENALTY

Saudi activist Israa al-Ghomgham and four other individuals on trial at the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) face the death penalty for charges related to their participation in peaceful protests.

Saudi Arabian activists **Israa al-Ghomgham, Ahmed al-Matrood, Ali Ouwaisher, Mousa al-Hashim, Khalid al-Ghanim** and Mujtaba al-Muzain were brought to a mass trial before the SCC in the capital Riyadh in August. Their next trial session is on 13 January 2019. **Five of them face the death penalty while Mujtaba al-Muzain faces up to 20 years in prison.** Their charges relate to their previous participation in peaceful protests.

During their first trial session in the beginning of August, the Saudi public prosecutor called for the execution of the five defendants, Israa al-Ghomgham, Ahmed al-Matrood, Ali Ouwaisher, Mousa al-Hashim and Khalid al-Ghanim. Amnesty International obtained court documents indicating that the five defendants have been accused of participating in protests in the Shia dominant Al-Qatif governorate and documenting these protests on social media, in violation of Royal Decree 44/A – a follow-up decree to the 2014 Law for the Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing (counter-terror law) – as well as travelling to Iran to receive theoretical training on how to organize riots, which is punishable under the counter-terror law. Some of the defendants were also charged with providing moral support to rioters by participating in funerals of protesters killed during clashes with security forces. Additionally, the Public Prosecution called for the maximum punishment under Royal Decree 44/A for Mujtaba al-Muzain which is up to 20 years in prison.

All six defendants were held in pre-trial detention for over three years. Israa al-Ghomgham was arrested along with her husband Moussa al-Hashim in December 2015, for their roles in participating in demonstrations in the eastern Al-Qatif governorate, in protest against their political and economic marginalization.

Please send a fax, tweet or letter without delay. (Postage is \$2.50.)

- * Urge the authorities not to hand down the death sentence to the five defendants.
- * Insist that they release Israa al-Ghomgham, Ahmed al-Matrood, Ali Ouwaisher, Mousa al-Hashim, Khalid al-Ghanim and Mujtaba al-Muzain immediately and unconditionally, as they are held solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association.
- * Call on them to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia.

Here is the contact information you need:

King and Prime Minister

His Majesty King 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: 011 966 11 403 3125 (This is via Ministry of the Interior and is hard to reach.)

Twitter: @KingSalman

Presidency of State Security

His Excellency General Abdul Aziz

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Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Salutation: Your Excellency

Please send a copy to

His Excellency Naif Bandir A. Alsudairy

Ambassador for Saudi Arabia

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Via website: <http://embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/canada/EN/Ambassador/Pages/Contact.aspx>

Human Rights Commission

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Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Salutation: Your Highness

Additional information

The Saudi Arabian authorities have intensified their crackdown on freedom of expression, association and assembly since August 2018, as demonstrated by the trials of several religious clerics before the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) and the Public Prosecutor's recent calls for executions of activists and clerics since August. In the past 3 months, the Public Prosecutor has called for the death penalty for at least eight individuals. These developments raise the alarm about the fate of dozens of activists, writers, journalists and human rights defenders who have been detained without charges or trial since September 2017. For further information refer to public statement: The Public Prosecution's recurring recourse to the death penalty.

On 5 November 2018, the families of 12 Saudi Arabian men sentenced to death after a grossly unfair trial, received information that the cases of their relatives were transferred from the SCC to the Presidency of State Security. As the cases were transferred to the body that holds prosecutorial powers and reports directly to the King, and considering the accustomed opacity of the Saudi Judiciary, the families of the 12 men seriously fear that their relatives could be executed imminently. The 12 men were part of a group of 15 men who were sentenced to death after the mass unfair trial of 32 people from Saudi Arabia's Shi'a minority, who had been arrested across Saudi Arabia in 2013 and 2014.

Amnesty International has also documented the cases of 18 other men from Saudi Arabia's Shi'a minority who are on death row and awaiting execution. Amongst the 18, are 14 men who were convicted of a series of offences including, among other things, taking part in violent protests in the Eastern Province in 2012. They were eventually sentenced to death by the SCC after a mass unfair trial, which relied on "confessions" extracted through torture. Four other Saudi Arabian men who were arrested for offences committed when they were under 18 are also on death row and face an imminent risk of execution. The four men are Ali al-Nimr, Abdullah al-Zaher, Dawood al-Marhoon and Abdulkareem al-Hawaj". Ali al-Nimr is the nephew of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a prominent Shia cleric and dissident who was executed in January 2016. The three men have said that they were tortured to make them "confess".

The death penalty is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, regardless of who is accused, the crime, their guilt or innocence or the method of execution. Saudi Arabia is one of the top executioners in the world. More than 2,000 people were executed between 1985 and 2016.