

UA 21/19

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SAUDI ARABIA

SAUDI ACTIVIST HELD IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Woman human rights defender Nassima al-Sada was placed in solitary confinement early in February in al-Mabahith Prison in Dammam.



Nassima has been arbitrarily detained since July 2018 without charge or trial. Her detention was part of a recent wave of arrests that targeted human rights activists. Since May 2018, at least 15 human rights activists, including several women human rights defenders, have been detained without charge. Amnesty International calls on the Saudi authorities to release Nassima al-Sada and all other human rights activists immediately and unconditionally.

Nassima has been campaigning for civil and political rights, the rights of the Shi'a community in the eastern province, and women's rights. Her campaigning focused heavily on the right of women to drive and for the end of the repressive male guardianship system. Prior to her arrest, Nassima al-Sada had been repeatedly targeted, harassed, and placed under travel bans for her human rights activism.

Please send a fax, tweet or letter to King Salman.

Urge him to release Nassima al-Sada immediately and unconditionally as she is a prisoner of conscience, solely detained for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

Urge him to extend the same freedom to all other activists, including all women detained without charge.

Write to

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

Twitter: @KingSalman

Salutation: Dear King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud

Please send a copy to

His Excellency Naif Bandir A. Alsudairy

Ambassador for Saudi Arabia

201 Sussex Drive

Ottawa, Ontario K1N 1K6

Fax: 613 237 0567

Phone: 613 237 4100

Email: amboffice.ott@mofa.gov.sa

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

Presidency of State Security

His Excellency General Abdul Aziz Mohammed Al-Howairini

Olaya Secondary Street

Olaya Riyadh 12611 8408

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: 011 966 11 412 5555

Human Rights Commission

Dr Bandar Mohammed Abdullah al-Aiban

North Ring Road, Exit 2

PO Box 58889

Riyadh 11515, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: 011 966 11 418 5101

Email: info@hrc.gov.sa

Twitter: @HRCSaudi

Additional information

Since May 2018, at least 15 human rights defenders, including several women human rights defenders have been detained without charge in Saudi Arabia. On 19 May, the Saudi Press Agency reported that seven individuals have been arrested for their “suspicious contact with foreign entities”, “recruiting people working in sensitive government positions” and “providing financial support to hostile entities abroad with the aim of undermining the security and stability of the Kingdom and shaking the country’s social fabric”. Amongst those targeted are prominent women human rights defenders Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan and Aziza al-Yousef. They faced accusations in state-aligned media, which include violating Royal Decree 44/A, a follow-up decree to the 2014 counter-terrorism law, through forming a “cell” and posing a threat to state security for their “contact with foreign entities with the aim of undermining the country’s stability and social fabric”. Royal Decree 44/A has previously been invoked in the trial of human rights defenders. In February 2018, Essam Koshak, a human rights defender active on social media in calling for reforms and respect of human rights in Saudi Arabia, as well as Issa al-Nukheifi, also a human rights defender, were sentenced to respectively four years in prison followed by a four-year travel ban and to six years in prison followed by a six-year travel ban. The prosecutor has sought the maximum possible

punishment for the charges, which according to Royal Decree 44/A carries up to 20 years in prison for, among other things, “affiliation with religious and intellectual extremist groups or groups that are classified as terrorist organizations nationally, regionally or internationally”.

In July 2018, two more prominent women human rights activists - Samar Badawi and Nassima al-Sada - were also arbitrarily detained. In June 2018 the authorities detained women’s rights activists Nouf Abdulaziz and Maya’a al-Zahrani, and activists who have previously been persecuted for their human rights work, such as Mohammed al-Bajadi and Khalid al-Omeir. Hatoon al-Fassi, a prominent women’s rights activist and academic was also reportedly detained a few days after Saudi Arabia lifted the driving ban in June 2018.

In November 2018, reports emerged that several activists, including several women arbitrarily detained since May 2018, were reportedly tortured, subjected to sexual violence and otherwise ill-treated during the first three months of their detention. One of the activists reportedly attempted to take her own life repeatedly inside the prison (See press release: *Saudi Arabia: Reports of torture and sexual harassment of detained activists* <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/saudi-arabia-reports-of-torture-and-sexual-harassment-of-detained-activists/>).

The wave of arrests in May 2018 is emblematic of an ongoing crackdown on human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia, and continued stifling of freedom of expression, association, and assembly. Since early 2018, several human rights defenders have been tried before the Specialized Criminal Court and handed down harsh prison sentences, as well as social media and travel bans under provisions of the counter-terror law, its follow up decrees and the Anti-Cyber Crime law for their peaceful human rights activism (See press release: *Saudi Arabia: First human rights defenders sentenced under leadership of ‘reformer’ Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman* <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/01/saudi-arabia-first-human-rights-defenders-sentenced-under-leadership-of-reformer-crown-prince-mohammad-bin-salman/>).