

UA 110/20

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## SAUDI ARABIA

### YEMENI LGBTQI+ RIGHTS DEFENDER ARRESTED

On 8 April 2020, Saudi security forces arbitrarily arrested 29-year-old Yemeni national Mohamed al-Bokari from his home in the al-Yarmouk neighbourhood of Riyadh. He is detained at Malaz prison. Following his arrest, al-Bokari was accused of “perversion”, “imitating women” and “disturbing public order” after he published a video stating his belief in personal freedoms of LGBTQI+ individuals.



Mohamed al-Bokari has neither been formally charged nor informed when his trial will begin. He has had no legal representation to date. According to a source close to him, al-Bokari’s physical and mental health has significantly deteriorated in the past three months, and he suffers from a heart condition.

According to the source, Mohamed al- Bokari was held incommunicado for a month, beaten and tortured to force him to “confess” that he is a “homosexual”. Al-Bokari was arrested after he appeared in a homemade video in which he responded to a question by one of his followers about his views on homosexuality by saying: “Every person is free to do what they will, and gay people have rights. Every person has rights. I hope you leave gay people be and not intervene in their lives. Every person is free.”

Two of Mohamed al-Bokari’s friends, both Yemeni nationals who were visiting him at home were also arrested with him on 8 April. Both men were later released and deported back to Yemen. “We are very worried about Mohamed. He isn’t allowed any visits in prison, and he hasn’t contacted us in two weeks”, the source told Amnesty International.

**Please send a tweet directly to King Salman or route your message via the embassy.**

- \* Share your concern that Mohamed al-Bokari has been detained for three months simply for exercising his right to peacefully express his beliefs. He is, therefore, a prisoner of conscience.
- \* Call on him to ensure that any charges against Mohamed al-Bokari are dropped and that he is released immediately and unconditionally, especially given his deteriorating health and COVID-19 outbreak concerns.
- \* In the interim, ensure that Mohamed al-Bokari is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, that he is immediately granted adequate medical attention, and access to a lawyer.
- \* Insist that he can remain in Saudi Arabia because his deportation to Yemen could put his life at risk.

**Write to** (there is no postal service to Saudi Arabia during the pandemic)

King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud  
The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques  
Office of His Majesty the King  
Royal Court, Riyadh  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Twitter: @KingSalman  
Salutation: Your Majesty

**Please copy**

Mr. Sulaiman Abdulkareem M. Al Aqueel  
Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy for Saudi Arabia  
201 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 1K6  
Fax: 613 237 0567  
Phone: 613 237 4100  
Email: [caemb@mofa.gov.sa](mailto:caemb@mofa.gov.sa)  
Via website: [embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/canada/EN/Ambassador/Pages/Contact.aspx](http://embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/canada/EN/Ambassador/Pages/Contact.aspx)

**Additional information**

The Saudi Arabian authorities have continued to escalate the repression of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including in their crackdown on online expression. They harass, arbitrarily detain and prosecute government critics, human rights defenders and anyone who dares to express themselves freely.

In November 2019, an official announcement and promotional video published by Saudi Arabia's state security agency categorized feminism, homosexuality and atheism as "extremist ideas", punishable by jail and flogging. While the state security agency issued a clarification that the definition of extremism in the video "contained many mistakes", leading feminists and women human rights defenders in the country remain detained and prosecuted for their human rights work.

Prior to his arrest, Mohamed al-Bokari's residency permit in Saudi Arabia had expired. He is currently at risk of being deported back to Yemen. He fled his homeland after having receiving death threats from armed groups following his defence of personal liberties and human rights. Mohamed al-Bokari also survived an abduction attempt, after which he left Yemen to seek safety in Saudi Arabia.