

Urgent Action Office 3-1992 Yonge Street Toronto ON M4S 1Z7 Phone: (416) 363-9933 Fax: (416) 363-3103 urgentaction@amnesty.ca
First UA: 65/24 Index: MDE 23/8330/2024 Saudi Arabia of July 16, 2024

SAUDI ARABIA

TEACHER SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS FOR TWEETS

On May 29, 2024, Saudi Arabia's Specialized Criminal Court sentenced 47-year-old teacher Asaad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi to 20 years in prison. His crime? Posting on social media. He criticized the government's Vision 2030 program and expressed condolences for a human rights defender who died in prison. Al-Ghamdi was arrested on November 20, 2022. Trusted sources say he spent his first three months in solitary confinement. He has also been denied proper healthcare, including treatment for epilepsy. Asaad's brother, Mohammad, was arrested five months earlier and sentenced to death in July 2023 for his social media posts. The Saudi authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Asaad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi. His conviction and sentence should be quashed.

Write to the Justice Minister urging him to:

- Immediately release Asaad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi and quash his conviction.
- Provide Asaad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi with adequate healthcare.
- Stop using terrorism charges to criminalize freedom of expression.
- Amend laws to comply with international human rights standards.

Write to:

Waleed Mohammed Al Samani
Minister of Justice
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Postal Code 11472, P.O Box 7775
Email: 1950@moj.gov.sa
Salutation: Dear Minister,

And copy:

Her Excellency Amal Yahya ALMOALIMI
Ambassador
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
201 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1N 1K6
Tel: (613) 237-4100 Fax: (613) 237-0567
Email: caemb@mofa.gov.sa

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On November 22, 2022, security forces raided Asaad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi's home in Jeddah. They forcefully took him away after searching his home and seizing books and computers. Asaad's brother, Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi, a retired teacher, was [sentenced to death](#) in July 2023 for criticizing the authorities on social media. Asaad was charged under counter-terror laws for social media posts

that criticized the government's Vision 2030 program and expressed condolences for a human rights defender.

Asaad was held in solitary confinement for the first three months of his detention. He suffers from epilepsy and has been denied adequate healthcare, leading to repeated seizures and injuries. He was denied legal representation for the first nine months and later given a state-appointed lawyer who did not prepare his defense.

Since 2011, the Saudi authorities have used the [Specialized Criminal Court \(SCC\)](#) to silence dissent. The SCC has used vague anti-cybercrime and counter-terror laws to equate free expression with terrorism. Amnesty International has documented many cases of unfair trials and harsh sentences, including death sentences, for journalists, activists, and clerics. Many have been detained or faced restrictions on their activism.

As of July 2024, Amnesty International has documented 82 cases of individuals prosecuted for exercising their rights to free expression, including 32 for social media posts. The actual number of such prosecutions is likely much higher.

Please take action as soon as possible until January 17, 2025! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.