

**Urgent Action Office** 3-1992 Yonge Street Toronto ON M4S 1Z7 Phone: (416) 363-9933 Fax: (416) 363-3103 [urgentaction@amnesty.ca](mailto:urgentaction@amnesty.ca)  
Second UA: 85/23 Index: MDE 23/8746/2024 Saudi Arabia of November 13, 2024

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

### **DEATH SENTENCE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS COMMUTED**

On September 24, 2024, Saudi Arabia's Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) reduced Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi's death sentence to 30 years in prison. The 55-year-old retired teacher faced this severe penalty for expressing his views online. Originally sentenced on July 9, 2023, al-Ghamdi was charged with terrorism simply for sharing peaceful criticism on X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube. His posts included critiques of the Saudi King and Crown Prince, comments on foreign policy, calls to release detained religious clerics, and concerns over rising prices. Amnesty International urges Saudi authorities to release Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi immediately and unconditionally, recognizing his right to free expression.

#### **Write to the Saudi Minister of Justice urging the authorities to:**

- Release Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi immediately and unconditionally, as he was convicted solely for exercising his right to free expression.

#### **Write to:**

Walid bin Muhammad Al-Sama'ani  
Minister of Justice  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia  
Postal Code 11472, P.O. Box 7775  
Email: [1950@moj.gov.sa](mailto:1950@moj.gov.sa)

*Salutation: Your Excellency,*

#### **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](mailto:caemb@mofa.gov.sa)

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

On June 11, 2022, State Security forces arrested Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi outside his home in Mecca as he sat with his wife and children. He was held in solitary confinement in Dhahban prison, near Jeddah, for four months without access to his family or a lawyer. After this period, he was transferred to al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh, where he was finally allowed to contact his family.

During questioning, authorities interrogated al-Ghamdi about his political views, including his opinions on detained Saudi clerics Salman al-Awda and Awad al-Qarni, both facing the death penalty for their political beliefs.

According to Amnesty International, al-Ghamdi was convicted on terrorism-related charges under Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism law. His alleged crimes included social media posts criticizing the Saudi King and Crown Prince, calling for the release of detained clerics, and protesting rising prices—actions protected by his right to free expression. The Specialized Criminal Court sentenced him to death on July 9, 2023, despite the absence of any violent crime.

On May 29, 2024, the SCC also sentenced his brother, Asaad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi, to 20 years in prison for similar online criticisms. Al-Ghamdi's other brother, Dr. Saeed bin Nasser al-Ghamdi, an Islamic scholar in exile in the UK, believes the harsh sentencing was a reprisal for his own activism.

On September 24, 2024, the SCC Appeals Court commuted Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi's death sentence to 30 years in prison. The Saudi judicial process remains opaque, often delaying families and defendants from receiving updates on their cases. Courts rarely provide written judgments or prompt notifications of appeal results.

Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of Saudi Arabia's intensified crackdown on social media critics. The SCC, under vague counterterrorism and cybercrime laws, has imposed prison sentences of up to 45 years for peaceful online expression. Reprisals extend to family members of dissidents, with many facing restrictions like travel bans, leading to forced family separations.

***Please take action as soon as possible until May 13, 2025! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***