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SAUDI ARABIA

SALMA AL-SHEHAB RELEASED FROM PRISON IN SAUDI ARABIA

On February 10, 2025, Salma al-Shehab, a Leeds University PhD student and mother of two, was released from prison in Saudi Arabia after serving a four-year term of arbitrary detention. Her release followed years of legal battles and unjust treatment after she was convicted of terrorism-related offenses for tweeting in support of women's rights.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Salma al-Shehab was arrested on January 15, 2021, during a visit to Saudi Arabia. She was detained in solitary confinement for 285 days, in violation of both international fair trial standards and Saudi Arabia's own legal procedures. Her trial before the notorious Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) began on October 25, 2021. During her pre-trial detention, she had no access to legal representation, including during interrogations.

In March 2022, the SCC sentenced Salma to six years in prison under Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism laws. However, during her appeal trial in August 2022, the prosecution pushed for an even harsher sentence. The SCC's appeals court responded by increasing her sentence to 34 years. Salma appealed again, and in January 2023, the Supreme Court referred her case back to the SCC for re-examination. The court eventually quashed the cybercrime charges but upheld other charges, sentencing her to 27 years in prison followed by a 27-year travel ban.

On September 25, 2024, after continued international pressure, Salma's sentence was reduced to four years in prison, with an additional four years suspended.

After her release on February 10, 2025, Salma was reunited with her children in Riyadh. It remains unclear whether she faces any restrictions on her travel or freedom of expression.

Salma's case highlights the ongoing threats faced by individuals in Saudi Arabia who advocate for women's rights and exercise their right to free expression online. Amnesty International continues to call on Saudi authorities to release all individuals unjustly detained for peaceful activism and expression.

Thanks to everyone who took action. We continue to monitor the situation closely and call for the immediate release of all those unjustly imprisoned for exercising their fundamental human rights.