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TÜRKIYE

SYRIAN REFUGEE FACES DANGEROUS EXTRADITION

On December 27, 2024, Turkish authorities arrested Syrian refugee Mohamad Alkayali based on a 2016 INTERPOL Red Notice requested by Saudi Arabia. The charge against him — “forgery of seals” — was filed three years after he left Saudi Arabia, where he had faced harassment for speaking out against the government’s treatment of Syrian refugees.

Mohamad Alkayali, who is not a Saudi citizen, has legally challenged the Red Notice. If extradited, he could face arbitrary detention or other serious human rights violations. Turkish authorities must immediately stop his extradition and release him from detention.

Write to Türkiye’s President of Migration Management urging him to:

- Take immediate action to stop Mohamad Alkayali’s extradition to Saudi Arabia.
- Ensure Turkish authorities release him from detention so he can be reunited with his family.
- Ensure that Turkey upholds its international human rights obligations and protects Mohamad Alkayali from refoulement.
- Request the urgent issuance of a travel permit for his wife so that she can visit him.

Write to:

Mr. Hüseyin Kök
Presidency of Migration Management
Çamlıca Mahallesi 122. Cadde No:4
Yenimahalle/ANKARA/Türkiye
Email: gocidaresi@goc.gov.tr
Salutation: Dear Mr. Hüseyin Kök,

And copy:

His Excellency Can DIZDAR
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye
197 Wurtemberg Street
Ottawa, ON K1N 8L9
Tel: (613) 244-2470 Fax: (613) 789-3442
Email: embassy.ottawa@mfa.gov.tr

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohamad Alkayali left Saudi Arabia in early 2013 after facing online harassment for publicly criticizing Saudi policies on Syrian refugees. He moved to Türkiye, where he has legally lived as a refugee under temporary protection for over ten years. Even in Türkiye, he and his family continued to face

harassment. His wife described it as an "online harassment campaign" due to his criticism of Saudi Arabia's human rights practices.

In 2018, while applying for Turkish citizenship, Mohamad Alkayali learned that INTERPOL had issued a Red Notice against him. The notice was issued by Saudi Arabia on March 18, 2016, based on an arrest warrant from Saudi Arabia's Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution. The charge against him is "forgery of seals," which he denies and knows nothing about. Saudi authorities have not provided any formal charges or court documents to support these accusations.

Mohamad Alkayali challenged the Red Notice legally with INTERPOL. His challenge was deemed admissible in May 2024, but no final decision has been made.

Although the Red Notice was issued in 2016, Turkish authorities did not act on it for nearly nine years. On December 27, 2024, they arrested Mohamad Alkayali based on the Red Notice. Red Notices are sometimes abused by governments to target individuals living abroad. Given Saudi Arabia's history of transnational repression, Turkish authorities and INTERPOL must scrutinize such Red Notices carefully, especially when they come from countries with a record of engaging in these tactics.

Mohamad Alkayali's wife has been unable to visit him due to travel restrictions placed on refugees in Türkiye. She lives in Istanbul and requires a special travel permit to leave the city. Despite her requests, all three of her applications for a permit have been denied.

Amnesty International has documented Saudi Arabia's increasing crackdown on freedom of expression. Individuals who criticize the government face prosecution and long prison sentences. Many of these individuals are prosecuted for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly.

Legal proceedings in these cases often fail to meet international fair trial standards. People are frequently held incommunicado, in solitary confinement, and denied access to lawyers or the courts.

Since 2013, Amnesty International has tracked 86 individuals prosecuted solely for exercising their rights to free speech and peaceful assembly, including human rights defenders, political activists, journalists, poets, and clerics. Among them, 40 were prosecuted for expressing their views on social media. The actual number of such cases is likely much higher.

Please take action as soon as possible until May 23, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.