



July 2021 report

# The continued downward trajectory of human rights in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia





Despite the numerous international reports of the brutality and repression of the Saudi regime, and the calls of international human rights organisations for Saudi Arabia to improve its human rights record and move forward with real reforms, its violations are growing and its transgressions increasing.

For all the attempts of the Saudi regime to improve its image in front of Western society, with formal claims of reform and deceptive media promotions to preserve rights, its daily practices and repeated violations confirm that its human rights record is still lagging considerably when compared to other states.

The following is a summary of the most prominent known human rights violations for July 2021.



# Continuing arrests

The Saudi regime continues its policy of arbitrary arrests, house raids and enforced disappearances against individuals that express a differing or opposing opinion to that of the government.

1.1 News documents from sources inside Saudi Arabia confirmed the arrest of nine academics and community figures in the city of Abha, southern Saudi Arabia, during the days of 7th and 8th July 2021. SANAD, a human rights organisation has confirmed the names of five individuals that were arrested, they are as follows: Dr Muhammad Al-Hazami, Dr Rashid Al-Alma'ei, Dr Ali Hassan Al-Alma'ei, Dr Qasim Al-Qirdi and Muhammad Kadwan.

Currently, SANAD is investigating the details and names of the others arrested as part of the crackdown on certain academics. According to information gained by SANAD, a security force team of 24 officials raided the house of Dr Muhammad Al-Hazami on Wednesday 7th July 2021 in the city of Abha and searched his house before arresting and driving him away to an unknown location. A similar operation was implemented against Dr Ali Al-Ma'ei. On the following day (8th July 2021), the remaining academics were arrested - SANAD is still investigating the method of their arrest and the conditions of their detention.

It is particularly noteworthy the authorities did not comment on their arrests, the justifications for it or their place of detention. This method of repression is the same approach practised by the government to remove the role models of society including academics, influencers and prominent figures.



1.2 Dr Omar bin Abdullah Al-Saadoun was subjected to arbitrary arrest by the Saudi security forces. As a result of his expression of opinion, he was arrested in Riyadh because of an article criticising the decision to close loudspeakers in mosques.

1.3 Secret sources confirmed to SANAD the Saudi authorities arrested 37-year-old citizen Issa Thayab Al-Jabarti on 5th June 2021 in Al Rawabi District, Jeddah. He was forcibly taken to an unknown place of detention and has not been seen since. The anonymous source stated, the reason for his arrest was his posts on Twitter calling for political and human rights reform.

It seems the Saudi authority is oblivious to the dangers of continuing its brutal policy of repression against academics, intellectuals and activists. Despite warnings issued by local and international human rights organisations, the state has disregarded and intensified its brutal repression and deterioration of human rights.



# Children in prisons

2.1 In Saudi Arabia, what is particularly disturbing is the increasing violation of the rights of children. The 4-year-old girl, Kayan al-Juhani, is the youngest victim in the prisons of the Saudi regime, as she was imprisoned before she was born. Her mother, Fatima Al Balushi, a human rights activist, was arrested when she was five months pregnant and gave birth to her daughter Kayan in prison. Kayan was born and grew up in state prison, deprived of the most basic childhood rights.

2.2 14 years old, Murtaja Qurayris was arrested in 2014 on charges of participating in the 2013 demonstrations. He has often been described by activists and human rights activists in Saudi Arabia as the youngest political prisoner in the prisons of the Saudi regime. In February 2020, the Criminal Court issued a final sentence against him to eight years imprisonment. He was prevented from travelling for a similar period. The arbitrary arrest and delay in trial is a serious violation and a crime against childhood.

2.3 Dozens of children were detained and taken to Saudi prisons, as reported by several international human rights organisations.

SANAD believes these arbitrary measures and arrests are a direct violation of freedom and the children be unconditionally, and respect children's rights and international conventions in this regard.



# Prison violations

3.1 The Saudi authorities continue to practice their egregious violations in prisons against political prisoners, social activists and reformers. Human Rights Watch revealed how the state authorities had utilised brutal new techniques against political detainees in Saudi prisons.

In a new report this month (seen by SANAD), the organisation stated new testimonies had emerged about the torture of prominent political detainees in Saudi prisons.

Claims of torture including electric shocking, physical abuse, floggings, and sexual harassment were made against the Saudi authorities. However, the authorities did not independently and credibly investigate allegations that they had tortured Saudi women's rights defenders and other detainees in early 2018.

3.2 The Saudi academic and human rights activist Dr Saeed bin Nasser Al-Ghamidi uncovered information that some detainees in Shaar prison in Abha city were subjected to brutal torture. He also stated (in a tweet on his social media account) that there was painful and chilling news coming out from Shaar prison in Abha regarding the abuse, torture and deliberate psychological and mental suffering of detainees.



# Medical negligence and coronavirus in Saudi prisons

4.1 The Saudi prison authorities have also been accused of failing to take any measures to limit the spread of coronavirus in its detention centres and concerns are mounting over the health of political prisoners and reformers inside the prisons of Saudi Arabia.

There were reports earlier from SANAD sources that there is discrimination in granting the coronavirus vaccine to certain detainees. Due to the substandard conditions in Saudi prisons, political reformers and activists are also suffering from severe health issues.

SANAD considers the ploy of deliberate medical neglect of prisoners an attempt to slowly neutralise the opposition to the Saudi regime.

4.2 The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor warned of the outbreak of the coronavirus inside the prison in the Saudi city of Abha.

The observatory said in a tweet: It is following with great concern reports of the outbreak of the coronavirus among Palestinian and Jordanian prisoners of conscience in Abha prison in Saudi Arabia.

The Euro-Mediterranean Monitor has stated it holds the authorities fully responsible for the health and safety of detainees. They are calling for the immediate health care of the injured and requesting provisions be made to control the spread of the coronavirus in the prison.



4.3 Activists on social media have highlighted and accused the Saudi authorities of ‘slow killing’ male and female detainees inside the Kingdom’s prisons.

The activists indicated on their social media posts that detainees are subjected to slow killing as a result of the absence of health care, neglect and lack of safety requirements with the spread of viruses and diseases.



# Demands

5.1 The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor had highlighted and warned of the widespread abuse and torture inside the prisons of some Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia.

It indicated that some Arab regimes practice the most brutal methods of torture against detainees, especially those who have a social and political activist background.

The observatory called on the governments of Arab countries to stop all forms of torture against prisoners and detainees, stressing most governments and conflicting parties in the Middle East and North Africa take torture as a systematic policy inside prisons and detention centres.

5.2 Amnesty International accused some governments, including the Saudi authority, of cooperating with an Israeli group to practice espionage in its attempt to silence journalists and attack activists.

The organisation said Project Pegasus reveals clearly how repressive governments found NSO Group's spyware of choice in their quest to silence journalists, attack activists, and crush any dissent, which threatens countless lives.

Amnesty International indicated that a large-scale investigation into the data leakage of 50,000 phone numbers, whose owners were targeted for surveillance, appears to have shown that spyware devised by the NSO Group has been used to facilitate massive human rights violations in various parts of the world, including Saudi Arabia.



This is yet another example of how the Saudi authorities ignore international warnings about its violations of privacy, human rights and freedoms.

5.3 Skyline International calls on the international community and other relevant human rights bodies to carry out field visits to prisons in Saudi Arabia to expose the violations that occur against detainees.

The organisation urged the international community to take serious action to pressure the Saudi authorities to stop the repression through repeated and illegal arrests of social media activists, academics and advocates. They also urged international bodies to not disregard the matter as it gave a green light to the Saudi authorities to exercise repression against expressions of opinion.

5.3 Michael Page, Deputy Director, Middle East division at Human Rights Watch, said new evidence alleging Saudi authorities brutal torture of women's rights activists and other prominent detainees exposes Saudi Arabia's utter contempt for the rule of law, and the failure to credibly investigate these allegations.

Mr Page explained, leaving the aggressors without accountability sends a message that they can practice torture with impunity and without any accountability for these crimes.

"The stench of torture and other horrific treatment of Saudi detainees will remain a disgrace to Saudi leaders unless they take urgent steps to stop these crimes and hold the perpetrators to account, even those at the highest levels," said Page.



# Releases

6.1 SANAD has learned the writer and novelist Ali Jamaan Al-Shadawi, was released from prison after being detained for 15 months by Saudi authorities.

Al-Shadawi was arrested in April 2020, because of a tweet in which he expressed mourning of the death of human rights defender Dr Abdullah Al-Hamid (may God have mercy on him). It is thought Dr Hamid died in prison as a result of deliberate medical negligence.

6.2 The Saudi regime also released the lawyer Aqel Ibrahim Al-Bahili, who was arrested in April 2020 for posting a tweet, calling for mercy for the human rights activist Dr Abdullah Al-Hamid. However, the release of both Mr Shadawi and Mr Bahili is incomplete as there are reports they are prevented from travelling, writing and appearing in the media – yet another violation of their rights.





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