

# Report on the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia



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منظمة سند الحقوقية  
Sanad Right Organisation





## Summary

Sanad human rights organisation monitors, on a monthly basis, all developments in the human rights file in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including the most prominent violations committed by the regime.

According to this monthly human rights report issued by Sanad, the Saudi regime continues its indiscriminate and brutal operations of demolishing citizens' homes in Jeddah. Security forces have also continued their arrest campaigns against elite academics and activists from the Kingdom, most notably Abdullah bin Ayedh bin Dghaither Al Shaibani and Dr AbdulRahman bin Yusuf Al-Rahma and the scholar AbdulMajeed Al-Arkany and Imran Al-Arkani. It was also recently revealed that a number of activists had been arrested, such as Dr Abdullah Marouf, Musa Omar Ali-Ghazi and Abdullah bin Saeed Thuwaini. Furthermore, a number of detainees have been subjected to retrials following the end of their sentences or have had their sentence extended without legal justification. Meanwhile, a number of personalities have been released, such as Dr Abdulaziz Al-Zahrani and Dr Fahad Al-Sunaidi. For more details, please read the report.

The human rights situation in Saudi Arabia continues to deteriorate as authorities continue to violate human rights, restrict freedoms, and pursue their systematic policy of repression and abuse of activists and those calling for reform.

**The following is a summary of the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia for February 2022:**



# Demolitions in Jeddah

The Saudi regime continues its demolition and removal operations in Jeddah, which the regime claims is a process for redevelopment projects. Ten neighbourhoods in Jeddah were completely demolished, while other neighbourhoods are facing imminent demolition. In light of the demolitions carried out by the Saudi regime in Jeddah's neighbourhoods for the alleged redevelopment projects, residents of neighbourhoods not included in the demolition plan live in the anticipation of the arrival of bulldozers and the start of their removal as well.

Some residents of neighbourhoods that were not included in the demolition plan awoke one day to find their homes marked with graffiti warning them to evacuate in preparation for imminent demolition. This would mean that nearly a third of Jeddah's residential buildings will be completely demolished. Recent demolitions have forcibly displaced thousands of citizens from Jeddah's neighbourhoods, estimated by statistics from human rights organisations to affect more than 72,000 people. Hundreds of families have actually become homeless as authorities did not provide them with alternate homes, nor did they compensate them enough to buy or rent substitute accommodation.





# Arrests

It was confirmed to Sanad that Saudi security forces arrested Sheikh Abdullah bin Ayedh bin Deghaither Al-Shaibani Al-Otaibi, owner of the famous Latamat camel farm. Sanad learned from its sources that the reason for the arrest was a dispute between the Sheikh and the head of the Camel Club, Fahd bin Hathleen, who is close to Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman.

Bin Deghaither had previously announced his retirement from camel auctions and festivals in Saudi Arabia after his loss in the Sixth King Abdulaziz Camel Festival, where a number of parties reported that the Camel Club headed by Fahd bin Hathleen had tampered with results of the competition, which resulted in Bin Deghaither losing the competition. Shortly after the camel festival, Sheikh Abdullah bin Deghaither announced his participation in the Qatar Camel Festival. It was confirmed to Sanad that his arrest ensued this announcement, and a statement was published on his Twitter account a few days later stating an apology for not being able to participate in the Qatar Camel Festival because of “unpreparedness”.

Accordingly, the Saudi regime arrested 14 relatives and friends of Sheikh Bin Deghaither of the Otaiba tribe. All arrests were without legal justification or clear charges. These arbitrary arrests come within the framework of politicising sports competitions and putting pressure on participants and fans of this famous sport in Saudi Arabia to follow the regime’s rules.

Academic AbdulMajeed Al-Arkany was also subjected to arbitrary arrest by state security forces, without clear charges or legal justification as part of the campaign of arbitrary arrests pursued by authorities against citizens of the Kingdom. Sanad was informed that the reason for Al-Arkany’s arrest was his contact with Turkish academics at a conference held by the Muslim World League in Saudi Arabia.

It was also revealed that Dr Abdullah Marouf was arbitrarily arrested from his home by state security agents and has been detained since late 2020, without any knowledge of the reason for his arrest or the charges held against him. Abdullah Marouf is an academic and activist, and he is the official representative of the Rohingya community in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and is the head of the Rohingya International Center in Makkah.

Human rights sources have reported that Saudi authorities arrested the youth, Omran Al-Arkany, without charge or an official arrest warrant. He was arrested from his home in Makkah amid the continuing campaign of arrests targeting citizens. Al-Arkany is a young activist defending the rights of Rohingya Muslims who are being subjected to the worst kinds of injustice at the hands of Buddhist extremists in Burma.

Saudi authorities also arrested Dr AbdulRahman bin Yusuf Al-Rahma following tweets he posted on Twitter. It is reported that the arrest of Al-Rahma came after one of his posts in which he praised the detainee, Sheikh Suleiman Al-Alwan, went viral. Dr Al-Rahma is a prominent Muslim personality. He studied at the hands of senior scholars; worked as a legal advisor at the Ministry of Islamic Affairs; and has a presence in charitable work in Africa.

Human rights sources recently revealed that Saudi authorities arrested the youth, Musa Omar Ali Ghazi, in front of the Grand Mosque in Madinah in November 2018, for expressing his opinion on the war in Yemen.

It was also revealed that Saudi authorities arrested the youth, Abdullah bin Saeed Thuwaini, son of the well-known poet Saeed Thuwaini al-Muhammadi al-Harbi, amid the continuing campaign of arbitrary arrests targeting citizens. He was arrested because of his activity on social media. Sources indicated that security forces arrested Abdullah from his home in Medinah after he posted content about detained sheikhs on his Twitter account.



# Trials



Sources revealed that the Court of Appeal in Saudi Arabia re-tried Sheikh Khalid Al-Rashed and added eight years to his sentence, bringing his total sentence to 23 years. Al-Rashed's sentence was supposed to end at the end of 2021, but he was retried before he was due to be released in an arbitrary procedure that lacked the most basic international judicial and criminal standards. When he was detained, Al-Rashed was subjected to ill-treatment and enforced disappearance, and he continues to struggle to communicate with his family, and authorities prevent him from appointing a lawyer.

The Court of Appeals in Saudi Arabia issued an arbitrary ruling against the incarcerated lawyer Mutaib Dhafer Al-Omari, with a sentence of 7 years in prison on charges related to cybercrime, according to the Saudi regime. Saudi security forces arrested him in 2019 due to tweets he posed expressing his opinion.

A Saudi court acquitted Dr Saleh Al-Talib from all charges. He was arrested in 2018 on charges of inciting public opinion because of his opposition to the expansion of entertainment projects and money being spent on such projects in exchange for others.

In another case, human rights sources reported the harshness of the sentence against arrested businessman, Osama Filali, who was arrested by Saudi authorities in 2018 along with his brother Hisham Filali. Sources confirmed that the Court of Appeal increased the sentence issued against Osama Filali from 3 to 5 years.

After the sentence of Dr Issam Al-Owaid expired more than a year ago, the Saudi judiciary re-tried him without legal justification. Al-Owaid is an academic and a faculty member at Al-Imam University, and he holds the position of Director of the Advocacy and Projects Department at the Al-Emaar charity. He memorised the Qur'an in his childhood, and has many publications on the subjects of society, women, and students of knowledge.

Human rights sources reported that the Saudi judiciary had shortened the prison sentence of Dr Amer Al-Almai from 9 years to 4.5 years. Al-Almai was arrested in March 2019 as a result of his relief work. Al-Almai, who is a doctor specialising in internal medicine, was known for his humanitarian work in caring for people with low-income from remote villages and taking care of those displaced.





# Prison violations

Sanad learned that the killer of detainee Dr Musa Al-Qarni confessed to his crime before court, and is now detained in one of the regime's prisons. Al-Qarni was tortured and beaten inside Dhahban prison with the knowledge of security services and the prison's administration. This resulted in severe head and neck injuries that led to his death last October. He is one of the most prominent people who lost their lives due to systematic torture and deliberate neglect by the prison administration.

Human rights sources also announced the death of Sheikh Mutlaq bin Nghimish Al-Duwaish inside the regime's prisons, aged 58. His death was two years after his arrest, and it is not known what the circumstances of his death were. Al-Duwaish was arrested in November 2019 for demanding the release of the Sheikh of the Otaiba tribe.





# Releases

Sanad learned that Dr Abdulaziz Al-Zahrani, who has been detained in one of the regime's detention centres since September 2017, has been released. Al-Zahrani's arrest was part of a large campaign of arrests carried out by the Saudi regime, targeting a number of influencers, activists, and academics.

It was confirmed to Sanad that the reason for Al-Zahrani's release is that he is suffering from cancer. His health has deteriorated dramatically in recent days as a result of medical negligence and failure to provide him with necessary medical care. Dr Abdulaziz Al-Zahrani, who worked as a professor at the Faculty of Arts at King Saud University, was subjected to enforced disappearance since his arrest in 2017, and there was no news of him before authorities recently released him without charges.

Sanad also confirmed the release of Dr Fahd Al-Sunaidi after more than 4 years of abuse and arbitrary detention. He was arrested by State Security forces as part of the September 2017 arrest campaign that targeted elite journalists, academics and activists. Al-Sunaidi faced harsh conditions during his detention. He was subjected to psychological and physical torture, and faced deprivation and isolation for long periods. His release is partial, as he is still prohibited from traveling and is deprived of freedom of movement and media appearances.

The Saudi regime also released the young detainee, AbdulRahman Al-Arifi, the eldest son of Dr Muhammad al-Arifi, who was arrested in December 2018 due to tweets posted on his personal account on Twitter. Human rights sources said at the time that his arrest was to blackmail his father and prevent him from writing and appearing in the media.

Sanad also learned of the release of detainee Fatima Al-Balushi with her daughter Kayan, after a painful detention that lasted more than five years. Al-Balushi was arbitrarily arrested by State Security forces in early 2017, despite being pregnant. Her child was born in prison and stayed with her until her recent release. During her detention, Al-Balushi faced numerous violations, including defamation, ill-treatment, psychological and physical torture, as well as enforced disappearance and harassment.

Saudi authorities also released Zainab Al-Hashemi after she was arbitrarily detained for more than 8 months without legal justification. Ms Al-Hashemi's release was conditional, which makes her vulnerable to arbitrary arrest at any moment. The authority's conditions for releasing Al-Hashemi included preventing her from traveling permanently outside the Kingdom, deleting all her accounts on social networking sites, as well as not participating or expressing her opinion in any activity inside the Kingdom.

This conditional release is a manifestation of the government's repression, rendering the released person vulnerable to arrest and repression according to Human Rights Watch.

Sources also confirmed to Sanad that the Saudi regime released Dr Ali Abu Al-Hassan after more than 4 years detention. He was arrested as part of the September 2017 campaign of arrests. Al-Hassan was subjected to harsh conditions during his detention: he was prevented from appointing a lawyer; he was prevented from being temporarily released when his mother died in early 2019; and it was made very difficult for him to communicate with his family and relatives.

Sources also confirmed the the release of Princess Basma Bint Saud with her daughter Suhoud Al-Sharif, after more than 3 years detention. Princess Basma bint Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud is a human rights activist and a media personality. She was arbitrarily detained with her daughter in mysterious circumstances in March 2019.

Saudi authorities also released Dr Saad Al-Shahrani who was arrested in the April 2019 campaign of arrests without legal justification or clear charges. Al-Shahrani, an academic who served as the Secretary-General of the International Association of Muslim Scholars, spent three years in detention without any charge. During his detention, Al-Shahrani faced ill-treatment and denied communication with his relatives.

Sanad also received news that Saudi authorities released Mrs Naima Al-Matrod, following over 6 years arbitrary detention. Ms Al-Matrod was arrested in February 2016, and the Specialised Court arbitrarily sentenced her to 6 years imprisonment for expressing her opinion. During her detention, Al-Matrod was subjected to deliberate medical neglect, and she faced various types of physical and psychological torture. Authorities imposed conditions and restrictions on her after her release, in addition to preventing her from traveling for 6 years.





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