



Sanad Human  
Rights Organization  
Annual report

2023

**Missing Justice**  
& Human Rights Violations in  
Saudi Arabia

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## Preface

Human rights situation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has been witnessing a continuous deterioration for several years. The authorities there continue to practice a systematic policy against freedoms and rights, increasing suppression of freedom of expression, exclusion of dissenting voices, detention of activists and human rights defenders, and violations against the rights of women and minorities.

Improving human rights file in KSA is important not only for Saudis, but also for the international community. Empowering human rights, public participation, and respect for freedoms and rights are basic conditions for prosperity, peace, stability, and development.

The Saudi government is trying to improve its distorted image through sportswashing and misleading cross-continental propaganda by hosting global sporting events or investing in international sporting entities to hide its real image of human rights violations.

Despite the challenges, Sanad Human Rights Organization (Sanad) remains committed to its values and approaches to achieving its goals of lobbying to improve the human rights situation in KSA, documenting cases of violations, and communicating with human rights bodies, international organizations, and legal entities in the world to unveil the state of freedoms and rights in the country. Sanad also defends human rights and political detainees. Sanad aims to be the voice for the oppressed and persecuted in Saudi Arabia. In this context, Sanad issues its annual report for 2023, which highlights human rights violations in KSA.

Sanad monitored the continued cases of arbitrary detention in KSA against all voices calling for justice, coinciding with vicious cases of violations such as solitary confinement and torture inside detention centers. In addition to its lack of the most basic humanitarian standards and international laws in cases of detaining individuals, KSA prisons deprive detainees of the necessary medical care, the right to attend the funerals of their first-degree relatives and uses unofficial prisons for detention.

Sanad also documented a worrying increase in execution rates in KSA during 2023. According to human rights and journalistic sources, executions in Saudi Arabia reached 170 cases, compared to 147 cases in 2022. The Saudi government also uses the death penalty as a tool for political blackmailing, threatening it to oppress those who express their opinions, or to take revenge against relatives of activists, as happened in the case of Muhammad Nasser Al-Ghamdi.

Sanad observed the continuation of grave judicial violations against detainees, which included failure to release those whose sentences had expired, issuing new sentences against them without legal justification, approving charges extracted under torture, and holding secret trials without legal guarantees which makes the trials apart from justice. The basis for the Saudi judiciary issuing charges against detainees, that were not mentioned by the public prosecution, is an extremely dangerous transgression that confirms the lack of independence of the judiciary authority.

This report highlights the Human Rights situation in KSA for the current year, and the level that human rights situation has deteriorated to during 2023.



## One: Arrests

Arbitrary detention constitutes a serious violation of human rights, as it deprives people of their freedom without legal basis and exposes them to the risk of torture and humiliation. In KSA, 2023 witnessed a continuation of such detention where these practices affected political and human rights activists both citizens and non citizens. Despite the difficulty of accessing official documents that authenticate these arrests due to the media blackout practiced by government bodies, Sanad has made a concrete effort to document many of these cases, accordingly Sanad believes that the volume of actual arrests is greater than what was revealed.

### January 2023 campaign

The Saudi authorities launched 2023 by arresting a group of Syrian residents in KSA. According to human rights sources, the Saudi authorities did not announce the reason for arresting these people. This campaign included the arrest of:

- Sheikh Saleh Al-Shami, one of the most prominent Syrian religious scholars who has been living in KSA since the 1980s and is 89 years old.
- Tahseen Al-Shami, son of Sheikh Saleh Al-Shami.
- Muhammad Al-Awar.
- Ibrahim Mahmoud.
- Dr. Rabie Al-Rahibani, a Syrian humanitarian activist.
- Walid Al-Durrah, a Syrian humanitarian activist.

### Documenting the arrest of a Yemeni businessman

Sanad documented the arrest of the Yemeni businessman, Muhammad Mutahhar Fadhayel, and revealed, through exclusive documents for Sanad, the reasons for his arrest by KSA authorities, which was his relationship with Turkish investors. Sanad resources revealed that the lawsuit filed by the Public Prosecution accused him of supporting contradictory entities such as the Lebanese Hezbollah, Ansar Allah Houthi group in Yemen, and also supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Qaeda! The first lawsuit list also included “Muhammad Fadhayel’s association with suspicious persons and leaders of political parties and organizations hostile to KSA, journalists, and persons with intelligence activities in Turkey via ties with Mr. Yasin Aktay, the Turkish President Advisor.”

Sanad unveiled the evidence adopted by the Public Prosecution to prove its allegations, which included Fadhayel's attendance at a conference that brought together a number of investors in Turkey, in which Fadhayel participated as one of the investors, and had a picture with the Turkish President's advisor Yasin Aktay that attended the event. The prosecution also relied on a video – on Mr Fadhayel's phone – of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, where he commended him. Another, so called evidence, was a picture of the former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, and a picture of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, in addition to keeping an offensive picture of Saudi King Salman and the former Emirati Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ). In addition, a screenshot of a conversation in a WhatsApp group called "Yemeni Updates No. 1." was used as evidence. On the other hand, in contradictory way, the Public Prosecution adopted that Fadhayel supports the Houthi group based on a Facebook account bearing the name Muhammad Mutahhar Muhammad Fadhayel, which he denied that the account was his asking the authorities to examine his devices, hence, the prosecution could not prove ownership of that account.

According to the exclusive document obtained by Sanad that revealed Fadhayel's defense against the charges targeting him, he stated that his meeting with Yassin Aktay – the head of the Investors authority – took place after he was exposed to a swindle in Turkey where he lost \$1.5 million to help him find a solution, and that he received some group messages from Mr. Aktay to which he did not respond. Regarding the claim that Fadhayel kept a video of President Erdogan, the offensive pictures of King Salman & MBZ, the former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, and the leader of Al-Qaeda, he denied doing that intentionally, but rather they were downloaded to his phone automatically, which is similar to hundreds of clips and pictures that are saved on ones' phone as a result of using WhatsApp application, which cannot be considered evidence that holds him accountable of such charges.

According to the document, Fadhayel defense was not sufficient for the public prosecution, as it demanded that he be sentenced to the maximum penalty stipulated in clause A-44 in the Saudi system. The Specialized Criminal Court responded and sentenced him initially to 7 years in prison, which was increased on appeal to 25 years.

[For more information about the arrest of Muhammad Fadhayel, please see Sanad's report for this case.](#)

## Transcontinental arrest

The Saudi authorities did not stop at suppressing and arresting its' citizens inside KSA, but rather escalated their repression to include even citizens who were able to flee the oppression of the Saudi regime, which does not constitute a new phenomenon during 2023 since the Saudi authorities had carried out several arrests and crimes outside its borders. These include the arrest of Muhammad Al-Otaibi in 2017, Dr. Osama Al-Hassani in 2021, and the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018.

2023 witnessed the continuation of this trend, as the Moroccan authorities, upon a Saudi request, detained Hassan Al Rabea at Marrakesh Airport on 14 January 2023, while he was trying to travel to Turkey, and handed him over on 06 February 2023 to the Saudi authorities where he is now facing torture and the risk of execution.

## Arrest of celebrities and media figures

1. Sanad documented the arrest of the young YouTuber Wahib Al-Sheikh in March 2023 without knowing the reasons for the arrest.
2. The Saudi authorities arrested Sudanese journalist and activist Hisham Abbas Omar in late January. He was sentenced to 6 months in prison, after which he was released. He was charged with inciting the public opinion of the Sudanese community in Saudi Arabia against Sudan and the Sudanese embassy in Riyadh.
3. The Saudi authorities arrested the Egyptian TikToker Abdel-Rahman Mohamed Abdel-Rahim in October while he was there to perform Umrah. His arrest happened because he published content in support of Palestine agony.
4. The Saudi authorities also arrested the Yemeni journalist Hisham Mustafa Ali Rashid immediately after his arrival at Riyadh airport, coming from Jordan, on 11 November 2023.

## Various arrests

1. Among the arrests launched by the Saudi authorities during 2023 was the arrest of Dr. Abdullah Al-Ahdal, in Makkah, because of an article he wrote in which he criticized the weak position of the Arab rulers towards Gaza War.
2. In May 2023, the Saudi authorities arrested Ibrahim Sabah Al-Amiri Al-Huwaiti for the second time after arresting him in 2021 on the basis that he refused forced displacement from his home.

## Arrests motivated by extortion

Considering the continuing human rights violations in KSA, arrest for the purpose of blackmail is one of the forms of the systematic repression targeting Saudi citizens. It also constitutes a serious crime and a worrying development in the methods of repression followed by the current regime in KSA. 2023 witnessed the arrest of five relatives of Saudi citizen Nader Al-Dossari in retaliation for a commercial lawsuit he filed against the Saudi government in Pennsylvania. The authorities stipulated their release as a condition for his return to Saudi Arabia.

According to Al-Dosari family on 11 May 2023, the Saudi authorities arrested two of Nader's brothers, Dr. Salman Al-Dosari and Sultan Al-Dosari. They also arrested his sister Nouf, his mother Munira Al-Qahtani – a Kuwaiti citizen suffering from cancer which was imprisoned in Al-Malaz Prison in Riyadh on the same day. On 09 April 2023, his third brother, Nayef was also arrested.

Al-Dosari family has confirmed that its detained members suffer from bad detention conditions. The Saudi authorities also referred their case to the Specialized Criminal Court, did not allow them to meet the family lawyer, and refused to provide any information related to the case.

2023 detainees' data:			
Name	Date	Reason	Verdict
<b>Salih Al-Shami</b>	January 2023	Unknown	None
<b>Tahseen Al-Shami</b>	January 2023	Unknown	None
<b>Mohammad Al-Awar</b>	January 2023	Unknown	None
<b>Ibrahim Mahmood</b>	January 2023	Unknown	None
<b>Dr. Rabei Al-Rahabani</b>	January 2023	Unknown	None
<b>Waleed Al-Durrah</b>	January 2023	Unknown	None
<b>Waheeb Al-Shaikh</b>	January 2023	Unknown	Forcible disappearance
<b>Hisham Abbas Omar</b>	January 2023	Public incitement	6 months imprisonment
<b>AbdulRahman Mohammad AbdulRaheem</b>	October 2023	Solidarity with Palestine	Unknown
<b>Hisham Mustafa Ali Rasheed</b>	November 2023	An article criticizing the weak position of the Arab countries with Gaza	Unknown
<b>Dr. Abdullah Al-Ahdal</b>	November 2023	An article criticizing the weak position of the Arab countries with Gaza	Unknown
<b>Hassan Al-Rabea</b>	February 2023	Unknown	Unknown
<b>Dr. Sulaiman Al-Dosari</b>	May 2023	Commercial case	None
<b>Sultan Al-Dosari</b>	May 2023	Commercial case	None
<b>Nouf Al-Dosari</b>	May 2023	Commercial case	None
<b>Munirah Al-Gahtani</b>	May 2023	Commercial case	None
<b>Naif Al-Dosari</b>	April 2023	Commercial case	None
<b>Ibrahim Sabah Al-Howaiti</b>	May 2023	Refusal of enforced displacement	None

## Detained in 2023



**Waheeb Al-Shaikh**



**Mohammad  
Al-Sawar**



**Salih Al-Shami**



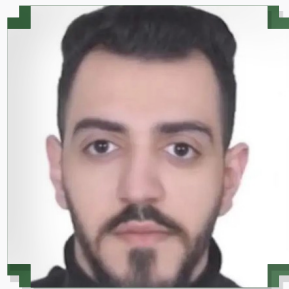
**Hisham Mustafa  
Ali Rasheed**



**AbdulRahman  
Mohammad**



**Hisham Abbas  
Omar**



**Hassan Al-Rabea**



**Dr. Abdullah Al-  
Ahdal**





## Two: Judicial rulings

For many years, KSA executive authorities interfered in judicial issues which leads to the politicization of the judiciary system undermining its independence and resulting in issuance of unfair and illegal rulings that constantly violate human rights. Sanad has documented several cases during 2023 as follows.

### Death sentences

#### “a simple tweet results in the death penalty in KSA”

1. Sanad revealed in early January that the Court of Appeal upheld the death sentence against Shadli Ahmed Mahmoud Al-Huwaiti, brother of the martyr Abdul Rahim Al-Huwaiti. It also upheld the death sentence against Ibrahim Saleh Ahmed Al-Huwaiti and Atallah Musa Muhammad Al-Huwaiti.
2. This verdict comes after their arbitrary arrest in April 2020 because of their rejection to forced displacement against Al-Huwaitat tribe. Saudi security forces, at that time, raided the village of Al-Khuraybah in northwestern KSA which resulted in the killing of Abdul Rahim Al-Huwaiti by Saudi forces and the arrest of dozens of people.
3. After a tweet in Saudi Arabia used to cause long-term sentences of up to 45 years, as happened with Noura Al-Qahtani, a noticeable escalation occurred during 2023 as tweeting, retweeting, and following accounts opposing KSA regime became sufficient for a discretionary death sentence! For example, Sanad, documented, on 10 July 2023, that the Specialized Criminal Court issued the death sentence against the detainee Muhammad Nasser Al-Ghamdi. According to documents obtained by Sanad, the Public Prosecution charged Al-Ghamdi with opening a fake Twitter (X) account through which he followed many accounts opposing the government, and that he retweeted them. To these accounts, he also posted a number of tweets through that fake account demanding the release of prisoners of opinion and expressing his sympathy for them. He also talked about unemployment, high prices, and the government's mismanagement of resources.

## Imprisonment sentences

1. According to exclusive documents obtained by Sanad documenting the sentences issued against the detained Yemeni businessman, Muhammad Mutahar Fadhail, as the Specialized Criminal Court issued an initial ruling sentencing him to seven years in prison, which was increased by the Court of Appeal to 25 years.
2. The Specialized Criminal Court of Appeal issued a ruling to imprison Fatima Al-Shawarbi for a period of 30 years and six months and a travel ban for a similar term, due to tweets through a fake ID on X platform in which she defended prisoners of conscience, in addition to tweets in which she demanded finding jobs for unemployed Saudi citizens. The Saudi authorities arrested Al-Shawarbi in September 2020.
3. In January, the Specialized Criminal Court issued a ruling to imprison Salma Al-Shehab for a period of 27 years and a travel ban for a similar term, after the Supreme Court overturned the ruling issued by the Court of Appeal, which ruled that Al-Shehab be imprisoned for 34 years. The Saudi authorities had arrested Al-Shehab in January 2021 due to her peaceful defense activity for women rights.
4. The Specialized Criminal Court issued a verdict sentencing Sarah Al-Jar, a senior college medical student, to 27 years in prison and a travel ban for a similar term. Sarah Al-Jar's arrest came after her peaceful activity on social media in which she expressed her opinion, and she was placed in the investigating prison in Dammam. She was subjected to several violations in prison, including prevention from communicating with family, banning the family to visit, and preventing her from hiring a lawyer.
5. The Specialized Criminal Court issued a ruling imprisoning activist Sakina Al-Othman for 40 years. It is noteworthy that Sakina, 35 years old, is blind and was arrested on the backdrop of human rights demands.
6. The Court of Appeal increased the sentences of Dr. Safar Al-Hawali sons who were arrested in July 2018. Abdullah verdict was increased from six to 16 years, Abdul Rahman from seven to 17 years, and Abdul Rahim from six to 15 years. The same court also increased the sentence of Dr. Safar's brother, Saadallah from four to 14 years, and the director of Safar's office, Dr. Ismail Al-Hassan was imprisoned for 10 years.
7. The Specialized Criminal Court issued a verdict to imprison Muhammad Mahmoud Suleiman Al-Teriqi, known as Abu Fadwa Al-Huwaiti, for a period of 30 years, due to his refusal to be forcibly displaced from his home in Al-Huwaitat.

## The judiciary orders the release, but the government refuses to implement

While the detainees and their families count the minutes and hours waiting for the moment their sentences end, many prisoners of conscience are shocked that they are neglected for additional years in prison without a legal reason or justification, which confirms the sham and absurdity of these trials denoting that these trials as merely a way to maneuver against criticism or to reduce pressure from the international community or human rights organizations. These trials remain an attempt to justify the disappearance and detention of hundreds of civilians behind bars simply for exercising their right to express their opinions.

On the other hand, by not releasing those whose sentences have expired, the Saudi regime violates its own system, called the Criminal Procedure System! Article 213 of this system stipulates that: “The accused shall be released immediately for non-conviction verdicts, a penalty not requiring imprisonment, or if the accused has served the sentence imposed during his detention period.” In the same context, Sanad issued a report that included 24 detainees whose sentences had expired and [who had not been released](#).



## Three: Releases

Freedom is a human right. No government may arrest anyone because of his/her opinions or beliefs. However, in KSA, although the government has released some prisoners of opinion, it cannot be ignored that hundreds of prisoners remain in detention for long periods even after the end of their sentences. Sanad, in the context of these releases, documented that the Saudi authorities released a number of prisoners of opinion, including:

### Engineer Saad Al-Mady

In March 2023, KSA authorities released him after pressure from the US State Department, as Al-Mady holds both Saudi and American citizenships. The authorities had arrested Al-Mady in November 2021 during a family visit in KSA. He was charged with attempting to destabilize the country and supporting terrorism. According to his son Ibrahim, his father was arrested based on 14 tweets on Twitter in which he criticized corruption and the deteriorating living conditions of Saudi citizens, and that his father had no political activity background.

### Saud Al-Funasan

The Saudi authorities released Dr. Saud Al-Funasan in November 2023, after a detention that lasted more than three and a half years, of his seven-year sentence, with half the term suspended.

### Marwan Al-Muraisi

The Saudi authorities released this Yemeni journalist after the end of his 5-year sentence and was deported to Yemen. Al-Muraisi was arrested in 2018 and acquitted by the Criminal Court in 2021, but the Court of Appeal overturned the acquittal and sentenced him to five years.

## **Ammar Tarbush**

Is a Syrian pharmacist who was released by KSA regime in mid-February, after serving his four-and-a-half-year sentence. He was deported immediately from KSA after the release.

## **Dr. Muhammad Ramzan**

The Saudi authorities released him after spending 11 months in prison since his arrest in September 2022.

## **Fatima Al Nassif**

The Saudi authorities released this nurse after six years of detention in September 2017. She was travelling abroad from Dammam Airport with her daughter and was treated violently by slamming her face into the police car by the security forces.

## **The release of some Palestinian detainees**

Sanad states, based on obtained documents, that the Saudi authorities launched a massive arrest campaign targeting many Palestinian and Jordanian residents in KSA. The arrests began individually during 2018, then became collective since 2019. In 2023, KSA released a number of detainees, some of whom have completed their sentences. Among the released detainees are Suleiman Al-Haddad and his son Yahya, the Jordanian Muhammad Fatafta, in addition to Tariq Abbas, Abdul Karim Al-Maali, Musa Abu Hussein, Muhammad Hussein Yaish, Abdullah Al-Rashed, Bilal Yahya Al-Akkad, Ammar Yahya Al-Akkad, Abu Bakr Al-Abd, and Hani Al-Khudari. On the other hand, there are still dozens languishing in Saudi prisons. For more about Palestinian and Jordanian detainees in Saudi prisons, see Sanad's report concerning that please. The following table summarizes the releases cases.

## Releases in 2023

Name	Rational	Term	Release reason
<b>Saad Al-Madi</b>	Tweets	Over one year	US DOS
<b>Saud Al-Funasan</b>	Single tweet	3.5 years	End of term
<b>Marwan Al-Muraisi</b>	Unknown	5 years	End of term
<b>Ammar Tarboush</b>	Unknown	6 years	Without trail
<b>Fatma Al-Naseef</b>	Unknown	6 years	Without trail
<b>Muhammad Ramzan Al-Faraana</b>	Unknown	11 months	Without trail
<b>Solaman Al-Haddad</b>	supporting the resistance in Palestine	5 years	Released with one year overdue
<b>Yahya Solaman Al-Haddad</b>	Palestinian resistance support	5 years	Proven innocent but was not released
<b>Mohammad Fataftah</b>	Mocking the Shura Council	4 years	Released with three years overdue
<b>Tariq Abbas</b>	supporting the resistance in Palestine	4 years	Released with one year overdue
<b>Abdul Kareem Al-Maali</b>	supporting the resistance in Palestine	4 years	Accusation not proven but kept detained
<b>Musa Abo Hosain</b>	supporting the resistance in Palestine	5 years	Released with one year overdue
<b>Mohammad Hosain Yaesh</b>	supporting the resistance in Palestine	4 years	End of term
<b>Abdullah Al-Rashid</b>	supporting the resistance in Palestine	4 years	Accusation not proven but kept detained
<b>Bilal Yahya Aqqad</b>	supporting the resistance in Palestine	4 years	End of term
<b>Ammar Yahya Aqqad</b>	supporting the resistance in Palestine	4 years	Accusation not proven but kept detained
<b>AbuBakr Al-Abd</b>	supporting the resistance in Palestine	4 years	Accusation not proven but kept detained
<b>Hani Al-Khudari</b>	supporting the resistance in Palestine	4 years	Released with one year overdue
<b>Mahdiah Al-Marzooqi</b>	Interacting with a tweet	3 years	

Releases in 2023



**Marwan Al-Muraisi**



**Saud Al-Funasan**



**Saad Al-Madi**



**Muhammad  
Ramzan Al-Faraana**



**Fatma Al-Naseef**



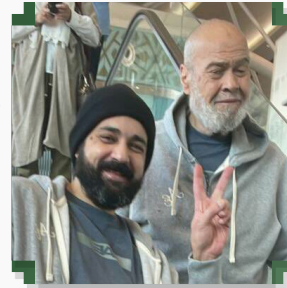
**Ammar Tarboush**



**Hani Al-Khudari**



**Abdullah Al-Rashid**



**Solaman Al-  
Haddad**



**Mahdiah Al-Marzooqi**



## Four: Violations inside detention centers

Many political and human rights activists who were arrested in KSA during 2023 were subjected to harsh detention conditions, as they were detained in unknown places without their families or lawyers being informed of their whereabouts. They were also subjected to torture and humiliation during their detention.

### Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Youbi

Private sources inside KSA revealed to Sanad that MBS personally supervises the arrest of former King Abdulaziz University President Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Youbi and ordered his arrest in a villa in Riyadh. In relevant details obtained by Sanad, the concerned Saudi authorities used an independent accountant to examine the financial records for the purpose of finding evidence to prove the accusations against Dr. Al-Youbi of financial embezzlement, estimated at half a billion Saudi riyals. Despite this, the conducted financial audit concluded that there was no evidence indicating that Al-Youbi is involved in any financial corruption or embezzlement practices. However, these results did not meet MBS desire, who issued instructions to continue detention and increase restrictions on Al-Youbi.

### Dr. Amer Al-Almai

Sanad was informed that the administration of Shaar Prison in Asir region did not allow Dr. Al-Almai to attend his father's funeral and take a last farewell look at his body. This violates Saudi law, which allows a detainee to attend the funeral of his first-degree relatives.



## Muhammad Mutahhar Fadhayel

An exclusive document obtained by Sanad revealed the list of cases submitted by the Public Prosecution against this detainee, which was changed more than once after three sessions of the trial. Some charges that were not present in the first list were added, which confirms the mockery of the trial and its illegality. The court also added a charge that was not included in the public prosecution list, that is supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon, which Muhammad Fadayel denied, stressing that this charge was never brought against him, not in Makkah, Jeddah, or Riyadh trials, and it is a charge added by the court without evidence or legal justification.

The document also revealed that Fadhayel was subjected to systematic methods of torture, as he was beaten on the head and stomach, and kicked in his feet, in order to extract confessions from him under duress, which happened, as two confessions were extracted from him, and he was also imprisoned in a solitary confinement cell for 4 months and twenty days. He was prevented from communicating with his family and children in Turkey, and the document revealed that the court rejected his request to appoint his brother to plead on his behalf in the Turkish courts, resulting in huge losses in his investments in Turkey.

## A horrific testimony by a member of the Saudi National Guard

Sanad received a statement from a former employee of the Ministry of National Guard, in which he confirmed his presence on the southern border since the beginning of the war. Muhammad Alsibyani, a former soldier who defected from the Saudi regime, mentioned several horrific human rights violations against prisoners and migrants crossing the border. His testimony documented many crimes and immoral practices committed by the regime, including indiscriminate bombing, deliberate killing, and mistreatment received by prisoners and illegal immigrants. Al-Sibani told Sanad that he was working as an attaché for the intelligence department on the southern border and saw several serious violations that resulted due to high authority orders in bombing random places and causing death to many innocent people. Also, due to these orders, many soldiers were killed by friendly fires and allowing the smuggling of weapons and drugs. Alsibyani stated that he and one of his fellow officers – a lieutenant – gathered these information and delivered it to the higher authorities (the brigade commander, the minister of National Guard, and the coalition commander), but they did get any response, which prompted them to escalate to MBS, but they were surprised by their transfer to Riyadh where they were interrogated and their personal devices confiscated, and they were forced to remain silent about everything they observed. A week later, he and his colleague were released after they were beaten, insulted, and threatened with fabricating malicious charges if they spoke again.

Muhannad Al-Subyani also stated that they were banned from traveling and suspended from work for six months. A year after this incident, Al-Subyani was subjected to an assassination attempt via a gunshot while leaving his home, and despite filing a report with the authorities, the case was closed and registered as unknown threat. Muhannad Al-Sibani revealed that the Saudi authorities arrested his friend, the lieutenant, because of published tweets from a fake account on his mobile in which he expressed his opinion regarding the current Saudi regime. Subsequently, Al-Sibani received summons for investigation, but he was released due to no proof against him. His colleague, on the other hand, was subjected to enforced disappearance up to date. Alsibyani reported that Saudi security forces stormed his family's home immediately after he announced his defection, and his family was interrogated and threatened to impose harsh penalties if they contacted him. It is noteworthy that Muhannad Al-Sibani is a former soldier in the National Guard. He left Saudi Arabia in April 2023. He announced his defection and opposition to the Saudi regime in May 2023. He was able to leave Saudi Arabia despite the travel ban issued against him and settled in the United Kingdom.



## Five: Executions

KSA is one of most implementing countries of the death penalty in the world. 2023 witnessed a noticeable increase in death sentences where the regime carried out 172 executions, compared to 147 executions in 2022, which raises concerns since the Saudi government uses executions to settle political scores.

Among the death sentences carried out by KSA during 2023 was the execution of two members of the Ministry of Defense, one of whom was an officer with the rank of pilot lieutenant colonel, and the other with the rank of chief sergeant. They were charged with treason with complete absence of trial details and procedures. This issue raises serious concerns since KSA issues death sentences based on reasons that do not amount to an arrest to escalate to death sentence! This took place with (please see page 9), Muhammad Al-Ghamdi, where he was sentenced to death because of tweets regarding prisoners of conscience and the Public Prosecution demanding their execution, among them are Dr. Awad Al-Qarni, Dr. Salman Al-Awda, and Dr. Ali bin Hamza Al-Omari.

Death sentences also included many of Al-Huwaiti's sons, as 2023 witnessed the Court of Appeal upholding the death sentence against Shadli Ahmed Mahmoud Al-Huwaiti, Ibrahim Saleh Ahmed Al-Huwaiti, and Atallah Musa Muhammad Al-Huwaiti, because of their rejection of the forced displacement that occurred to the Al-Huwaiti tribe.



## Six: Al-Huwaitat, a present-absent case

The issue of the Al-Huwaitat tribe is still life in the international community and its human rights organizations, but the Saudi authorities are still constantly targeting members of Al-Huwaitat tribe to build NEOM project located on their lands. 2023 witnessed a continuation of these violations to which they are exposed, as Saudi security forces carried out several raids into a number of Al-Huwaitat homes, including a house for relatives of Abdul Rahim Al-Huwaiti, who was killed by KSA security in 2020 in his home in Al-Khuraybah. The Saudi government was not satisfied with the raids only, but also is cutting off water and electricity to all members of the tribe since mid-June 2023.

Among the homes included in the raid were that of Abdul Rahim Al-Huwaiti's mother and that for his brother Shadli Al-Huwaiti who was sentenced to death along with Ibrahim Saleh Al-Huwaiti, as well as Abdullah Dakhil Allah Al-Huwaiti, who was sentenced to 50 years in prison. In May 2023, the Saudi authorities re-arrested Ibrahim Sabah Al-Amiri Al-Huwaiti for the second time after arresting him in 2021 on the bases of refusing forced displacement from his home.

The year 2023 also witnessed the Court of Appeal upholding the death sentence against Shadli Ahmed Mahmoud Al-Huwaiti, brother of the martyr Abdul Rahim Al-Huwaiti. It also upheld the death sentence against Ibrahim Saleh Ahmed Al-Huwaiti and Atallah Musa Muhammad Al-Huwaiti. This ruling comes after their arbitrary arrest in April 2020 because of their rejection of forced displacement that happened to the Al-Huwaitat tribe.



## Seven: The law is casted away

Compliance with laws is one of the most important and basic guarantees of human rights and public freedoms. Laws are what determine the actions that are considered crimes, and the punishments that their perpetrators deserve. Ensuring respect for these laws is essential for maintaining security and stability in society, protecting the rights of individuals, and ensuring their freedoms. However, The Saudi government is witnessing lack of commitment to its own codified laws. The government's violations of the penal system begin with Article 2 through arrest without legal bases requiring detention, which was confirmed by a group of experts through a statement issued in 2023 affirming that the detention to a number of prisoners of conscience was arbitrary and unlawful. Article 2 prohibits harming an arrested person physically or morally which the Saudi regime has not adhered to, as many prisoners of opinion have been subjected to torture in prisons including Muhammad Fadayel as mentioned and documented by Sanad in 2023. The Saudi authorities also violate Article 4 and prevent the detainee of a lawyer to defend him. KSA authorities also violates Article 42 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which stipulates that home invasions are prohibited except by a reasoned order from the prosecution, which the regime did not abide by as the team of experts noticed against Dr. Awad Al-Qarni said that he was arrested without any reasoned order, which was confirmed by Sanad also against many prisoners of conscience.

One of the most prominent articles that KSA authorities continue to violate is Article 113, which stipulates the mandatory of releasing the detainee if his/her sentence ended. The Saudi government noticeably ignores this article by refusing to release many prisoners of opinion which happened with Dr. Muhammad Al-Qahtani and the human rights activist Issa Al-Nukhaifi. These were subjected to enforced disappearance near the end of their sentences and for more than a full year up to now, as is the case with many prisoners of conscience. The Saudi government has also, in many cases, increased the sentence of such prisoners after its end or as it nears its end.



## **Eight: Human rights in KSA before the international community**

### **US State Department report (March 2023)**

The US Department of State issued its periodic report on human rights practices around the world. The report included the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia, where it concluded by confirming documented reports of human rights violations in Saudi Arabia. These include: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings,

- enforced disappearance, torture and cruel,
- inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by government officials,
- harsh and life-threatening prison conditions,
- arbitrary arrest and detention,
- political prisoners or detainees,
- transnational repression against individuals in other countries,
- serious issues related to judiciary independence,
- abusive or unlawful interference with privacy,
- punishing family members for alleged crimes committed by a relative,
- serious violations during conflicts such as civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure because of airstrikes in Yemen,
- imposing serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media such as unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists and others and censorship,
- serious restrictions on Internet freedom,
- significant interference with freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association such as overly restrictive laws on organizing, financing or operation of NGOs and civil society organizations,
- severe restrictions on religious freedom,

- restrictions on freedom of movement and residence within the territory of the state and on the right to leave the country,
- inability of citizens to choose their government peacefully through free and fair elections,
- serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation,
- serious government restrictions on local and international human rights organizations,
- prohibiting independent trade unions or imposing significant restrictions on workers' freedom of association.

**The report also stated that, in many cases, the government did not investigate, prosecute, or punish officials accused of human rights violations which promote an environment of impunity.**

## Reports of Group of Experts on Arbitrary Detention

The expert group on emergency detention during 2023 issued several opinions regarding prisoners of conscience, including opinions regarding Dr. Awad Al-Qarni, Dr. Safar Al-Hawali, Dr. Salman Al-Awda, Dr. Khaled Al-Awda, activist Salma Al-Shehab, activist Noura Al-Qahtani, Aida Al-Ghamdi, and her son Adel Al-Ghamdi. The Group concluded that those named had been subjected to serious violations that made their detention arbitrary, and that they had not enjoyed a fair trial. The Working Group noted that the Specialized Criminal Court is not sufficiently independent from the Ministry of Interior and cannot be considered an independent and impartial court that enjoys the presumption of innocence and guarantees necessary for defense. The Group also concluded that, considering all the circumstances of the case, the appropriate solution is to immediately release all those named and grant them an enforceable right to compensation and other forms of reparation, in accordance with international law.



## Nine: Sports washing

KSA is one of the most prominent countries that practice sportswashing, as it invests heavily in sports, by hosting major sporting events, buying international sports teams, and sponsoring various sports. Through these investments, Saudi Arabia seeks to use sports to cover up its violations, which contributes to continuing misconduct without accountability. 2023 witnessed a continuation of this policy where KSA:

- hosted the Formula 1 race,
- hosted 2023 ATP Next Generation Championship, and the 2023 ATP Cup,
- Italian 2023 Super Cup,
- FIFA announcing that KSA will host the 2034 World Cup.

As well as other sporting activities through which the regime is trying to whitewash its poor human rights record and improve its global image, which suffers from widespread criticism due to human rights violations.





## Ten: Freedom of the press

Freedom of the press is a fundamental human right, ensuring that individuals and communities can access information and express their opinions freely. However, in KSA, freedom of the press is systematically violated by the authorities.

One form of violation of press freedom is the absence of diversity in opinions and orientations, as the media is restricted to publish only one point of view, that is the government's, which leads to the absence of other opinions depriving the public of correct and objective information. KSA prohibits publishing any reports that criticize the regime resulting in only one point of view, which is the regime's side.

In the same context, Sanad received information indicating that Saudi security services intend to arrest several social media celebrities in Saudi Arabia. This happens under immediate supervision of MBS, for several influencers on Snapchat and TikTok applications where the regime arrested:

- young YouTuber Waheeb Al-Sheikh and he is still in detention,
- the journalist Muhammad Al-Hajji and then released him after 15 days of arbitrary detention,
- the arrest of the Yemeni journalist. Hisham Rasheed,
- continuing to arrest several journalists, such as Dr. Ahmed Al-Soyan, a member of the Islamic Press Association, journalist Malik Al-Ahmad, Khaled Al-Almi, Zuhair Kutbi, Zana Al-Shehri, Abdullah Al-Maliki, and Turki Al-Jasser, in addition to the Jordanian journalist Abdul Rahman Farhana, who was sentenced to 19 years in prison and other journalists detained in Saudi prisons.

In the global context, KSA declined in the Press Freedom Index issued by Reporters Without Borders during 2023 to rank 170 out of 180 countries included in the evaluation, hence, KSA retarded four places from its previous 166 rank in 2022.

Freedom of the press is a basic human right that must be enjoyed by everyone, without discrimination. The continued violations of press freedom in Saudi Arabia constitute a serious violation of human rights and harm Saudi society.



## Eleven: The “Bidoon” file

KSA follows a racially discriminatory policy against nearly a quarter of a million people living in Saudi territory, whom it calls “Bidoon”, meaning these with no citizenship. The regime deprives them of citizenship, causing them many challenges and serious violations of the most basic rights guaranteed by all international human rights law including deprivation of education, work, health care, housing, and freedom to travel, which leads to great human agonies among these citizens.

Despite repeated calls to find radical solutions to end the suffering of the (Bidoons) by granting them citizenship, the Saudi government continues to ignore this problem, with unjustified insistence on the continuation of these violations against this group of people.



## Twelve: Report recommendations

1. Sanad calls on the international community to carry out its duties by putting pressure on the Saudi regime to stop the deteriorating human rights violations in KSA.
2. Sanad calls on the Saudi authorities to repeal laws restricting freedom of expression and assembly, including the Anti-Cybercrime Law and the Anti-Terrorism Law which have been used to quarantine people's rights to freedom of expression.
3. Sanad calls on the Saudi authorities to stop persecuting activists and human rights defenders, release all those detained for their peaceful opinions, and cancel all travel ban provisions against Saudi citizens.
4. Sanad calls on the Saudi regime to allow freedom to form human rights associations and peaceful political activities.
5. Sanad calls on the regime to address domestic violence and provide support to women victims of violence.
6. Sanad calls on the Saudi authorities to allow international observers to visit KSA, meet detainees in prisons, attend trial sessions, and verify the legal and penal measures taken and that they do not violate human rights, in addition to achieving justice.
7. The Saudi authorities must carry out comprehensive reforms to the judicial system to ensure its independence and impartiality, ensure a fair trial for all, and stop trialing political detainees in criminal courts specialized in terrorism cases.
8. Sanad calls on the regime to stop the use of torture, mistreatment, and all forms of violations in detention centers.
9. Sanad calls on the Saudi authorities to stop forced displacement, return the displaced to their homes, and compensate them with the necessary compensation. KSA authorities must rectify (Bidoon) situation and grant them all legal and human rights.



# Annual report

## Sanad Human Rights Organization

2023

# Missing Justice

## & Human Rights Violations in Saudia Arabia