

URGENT ACTION

TWO SUDANESE DISSIDENTS INTERROGATED FOR ACTIVISM

Two Sudanese nationals, who till 13 February had been held incommunicado in Saudi Arabia since their arrest on 21 December 2016, have been interrogated by the Saudi Arabian authorities about their social media activism and are now awaiting trial. They have been told they could face deportation to Sudan where they would be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. They are prisoners of conscience.

Sudanese nationals **Elgassim Mohamed Seed Ahmed** and **Elwaleed Imam Hassan Taha** have been detained without charge since their arrest on 21 December 2016. They told their families that they were interrogated around eight times by security officers from the General Directorate of Investigations (also known as al-Mabahith), mostly about their social media activism following their support of the civil disobedience protest in Sudan in December 2016 on Facebook. Security officers told them that they are being detained and interrogated at the behest of the Sudanese authorities and that they might be deported to Sudan.

Both men were held incommunicado from the date of their arrest until 13 February, when their families were allowed to visit them for the first time. However, they remained in solitary confinement at al-Ha'ir prison in the Saudi Arabian capital, Riyadh, until 6 March when they were finally moved into a cell together. At no point during their ongoing detention, nor interrogations, have they had legal representation. They are awaiting trial.

Elgassim Seed Ahmed is the founder of a public Facebook group called 'The tragedy of the military and Kiezan governance in Sudan', which according to the family used to be critical of the Sudanese government but has -- since Elgassim Seed Ahmed's arrest -- been hacked. Elwaleed Imam is a member of the group. On 19 December 2016 both men supported on social media a day of civil disobedience in Sudan, in protest against new economic austerity measures imposed by the government.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Saudi Arabian authorities to release Elgassim Seed Ahmed and Elwaleed Imam immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to ensure that, pending their release, the two men are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and granted regular access to their families and a lawyer of their choice without delay;
- Urging them, in accordance with their obligations under international law, to ensure that the two men are not deported to Sudan, where there is a real risk they would be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 April 2017 TO:

King and Prime Minister

His Majesty Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: (via Ministry of Interior)
+966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)
Twitter: @KingSalman
Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Minister of Interior
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 403 3125
Twitter: @M_Naif_Alsaud
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Human Rights Commission

Bandar Mohammed 'Abdullah al-Aiban
P.O. Box 58889, Riyadh 11515
King Fahd Road
Building No. 3, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 418 510

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 9/17. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/5489/2017/en/

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Elgassim Seed Ahmed has lived in Saudi Arabia since 1998, Elwaleed Imam since 2013. Both men work in a supply company in Riyadh. They were arrested outside their workplace at about 5pm on 21 December 2016 by security officers dressed in civilian clothing. They were driven to their respective homes, which the officers then searched. The officers told Elgassim Seed Ahmed's family that they were from the Ministry of Interior's Security Division and that he would be released by midnight. No arrest or search warrant was shown to the families for either men. The two men were held incommunicado from the time of their arrest until 13 February, when their families were allowed to visit. According to their families, Elgassim Seed Ahmed and Elwaleed Imam understood from security officials following their interrogation that they are now awaiting trial, after which they could face imprisonment or deportation.

Amnesty International has also documented the detention of another Sudanese national and political activist residing in Saudi Arabia, Alaa Aldin Dafalla al-Difana (see UA 50/17 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/5779/2017/en/>), a 44 year old father of six and an employee at a driving school in Mecca, western Saudi Arabia. Alaa Aldin al-Difana was arrested at around 9am on 26 December 2016 by four security force officers from the Ministry of Interior in his apartment in Mecca. They searched his home and car and confiscated his phone and documents, without an arrest or search warrant. He has since, for the most part, been held in incommunicado detention at Dhahban prison outside of Jeddah, western Saudi Arabia, putting him at risk of torture and other-ill treatment. Alaa Aldin al-Difana is a journalist, long-standing opposition activist and a member of the National Umma Party (Hizb al-Umma al-Qawmi) in Sudan, an opposition political party in Sudan. Most recently, Alaa Aldin al-Difana showed his support for the November and December 2016 civil disobedience campaign in Sudan on his Facebook page. It appears that he is being detained in relation to his online activism.

On 3 November 2016, the government of Sudan imposed new economic austerity measures to reduce the trade deficit and to stop the deteriorating exchange rate of the Sudanese Pound. The new measures have significantly increased fuel, transport, food, electricity and medicine prices. In protest against the government's new economic policy, political activists called for three-day nationwide strikes, which were widely supported, on 27- 29 November 2016. A call was then made for a second civil disobedience action on 19 December 2016, which was supported by activists both inside and outside Sudan. In a pre-emptive move in early November 2016, the Sudanese government began arresting dozens of political activists and continually suppressed press freedom; seven newspapers have all had their issues confiscated on 23 different occasions in November and December 2016.

Further information on UA: 9/17 Index: MDE 23/5897/2017 Issue Date: 17 March 2017