

URGENT ACTION

SAUDI ARABIAN WRITER ZUHAIR KUTBI RELEASED

On 23 June, Saudi Arabian writer Dr Zuhair Kutbi was released after serving two years in prison. He remains banned from travelling and writing on social media. The conditions of his release are unknown.

On 23 June, Dr Zuhair Kutbi, a prominent Saudi Arabian writer, was released after serving two years in prison. On 21 December 2016, the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in Riyadh sentenced Dr Zuhair Kutbi to four years imprisonment, followed by a five-year ban on overseas travel, a fine of 100,000 Saudi Arabian riyals (about USD \$26,600) and a 15-year ban on writing and giving interviews to the media. The court also ordered Dr Zuhair Kutbi to erase his social media accounts. The SCC suspended two years of his four-year sentence because of his health, but indicated it would re-impose them if he would commit an “offense” again.

The SCC found Dr Zuhair Kutbi guilty of violating Saudi Arabia’s counter-terror law, the Law for Crimes of Terrorism and Its Financing, and Article 6 of the Anti-Cyber Crime Law by “inciting public opinion”, “sowing discord” and “reducing people’s respect of the rule of law”.

It is believed that Dr Zuhair Kutbi was arrested on 15 July 2015 because of comments he made on 25 June 2015 on the TV show *Fi al-Samim* (To the Point), on the Rotana Khalijia satellite channel, in which he criticized political repression in Saudi Arabia and argued for reforms such as transforming the country’s political system into a constitutional monarchy.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the second update of UA 188/15. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/3193/2016/en/>

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