

# URGENT ACTION

## SUDANESE ACTIVISTS HELD INCOMMUNICADO

**Two Sudanese nationals have been detained incommunicado since their arrest on 21 December 2016 in Saudi Arabia after they supported recent civil disobedience in Sudan on social media. They are prisoners of conscience.**

**Elgassim Mohamed Seed Ahmed, 52, and Elwaleed Imam Hassan Taha, 44,** were arrested on 21 December 2016, as they left their office in the Saudi Arabian capital, Riyadh. They are being arbitrarily detained in a-Ha'ir prison, Riyadh, and have been denied contact with their families and lawyers. 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.

The two men were arrested at about 5pm on 21 December by security officers dressed in civilian clothing outside their workplace. 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 Elgassim Seed Ahmed would be released by midnight. No arrest or search warrant was shown to the families for either men.

On 6 January, officials from the General Directorate of Investigations (GDI, or *al-Mabahith*), visited Elgassim Seed Ahmed and Elwaleed Imam's workplace and informed their manager that the two men were being detained while "secret investigations" were being carried out, and that phone calls and visits were not permitted. The officials told the manager to inform the two men's families, but did not disclose where the men were being held. The families of Elgassim Seed Ahmed and Elwaleed Imam visited the Ministry of Interior on 16 and 17 January respectively and were informed by officials that both men are being detained in al-Ha'ir prison and are not allowed any contact with their families or lawyer. Both men have been in incommunicado detention since their arrest on 21 December, raising fears they might be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Their families also fear that they may be deported to Sudan where they would be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

### 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;
- 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 FEBRUARY 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.** His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz - Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in London, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 30 Charles Street, Mayfair, London, W1J 5DZ tel: 020 7917 3000 or 02079173288, fax 02079173113 email: [ukemb@mofa.gov.sa](mailto:ukemb@mofa.gov.sa) complete the webform here:

<http://embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/uk/EN/ContactDiplomaticMission/Pages/ContactWithDiplomaticMission.aspx>

Twitter: @SaudiEmbassyUK, Salutation: Your Royal Highness

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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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.

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. The government announced that it will increase salaries by 20% to mitigate the impact of such increases. Since the announcement, the US Dollar went up from 16 to 19.5 Sudanese Pound (SDG), while the parallel exchange rate continued to depreciate. 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. A call was then made for a second civil disobedience action on 19 December, which was supported by activists both inside and outside Sudan. In a pre-emptive move in early November, the Sudanese government began arresting dozens of political activists and continually suppressed press freedom; seven newspapers had their issues confiscated on 23 different occasions in November and December 2016.

In a similar case documented by Amnesty International, Sudanese national **Waleed Al Dood Al Makki Al Hussein** (see UA 193/15 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/2416/2015/en/>) was arrested on 23 July 2015 in the city of al-Khobar in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province by officers from the General Directorate of Investigations. In 2005 he set up *Al Rakoba*, now one of the most popular Sudanese news websites. The website mainly publishes news items from various sources, including the Sudanese government, on political affairs, as well as social and economic issues, in the country. Many of the articles are critical of government policy and include some that have been censored in Sudanese newspapers by the government's security services.

Waleed al-Hussein was arrested at home and taken first to the GDI office in al-Khobar and later to the GDI prison in Dammam. He was held without charge and in solitary confinement for 113 days and interrogated about his criticism of the Sudanese government and his involvement with *Al Rakoba*. According to a relative, Waleed al-Hussein's interrogators told him he had been arrested at the request of the Sudanese authorities. Waleed al-Hussein was released in March 2016 after signing a pledge to "be a good citizen", "not undertake any political activity while inside and outside of the Kingdom" and "not release the secrets of the prison". Waleed al-Hussain left Saudi Arabia on 20 September 2016 to the United States.

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