

URGENT ACTION

ISSA AL-HAMID RISKS LENGTHY PRISON SENTENCE

Issa al-Hamid, a Saudi Arabian human rights defender and founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association, is at risk of being sentenced to a lengthy prison term by the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh for his peaceful human rights activism.

Human rights defender **Issa al-Hamid** is a founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), an independent human rights organization. He is on trial at the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in Riyadh and is expected to receive a lengthy prison sentence on as early as 17 April. Similar to the nine other founding members of ACPRA currently imprisoned for their peaceful human rights activism, Issa al-Hamid has been charged with “defaming the Council of Senior Religious Scholars”, “insulting the judiciary”, “participating in the establishment of an unlicensed organisation” (understood to be ACPRA), “communicating false information to international organisations in order to harm the image of the state” and “violating Article 6 of the Anti-Cyber Crime Law”, among other charges. These charges relate to a number of statements published online under the name of ACPRA on a range of issues, including the “right to peaceful assembly” and “the Ministry of Interior’s repression against families of political prisoners”.

Issa al-Hamid was initially summoned to investigation by the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution in November 2013 and he was investigated for several months before his trial began on 3 July 2014 at the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. Issa al-Hamid was denied access to a lawyer and was subjected to ill-treatment throughout his investigation.

Issa al-Hamid’s brothers, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid, are also founding members of ACPRA and have been sentenced to lengthy prison sentences for their peaceful human rights activism on March 2013 and October 2015, respectively.

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

- Calling on the authorities to drop all charges against Issa al-Hamid, as they stem solely from the peaceful exercise of his rights;
- Urging them to ensure that he is protected from torture or other ill-treatment;
- Calling on them to ensure that the criminal justice system is not misused to target or harass human rights defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 MAY 2016 TO:

King and Prime Minister

His Majesty King 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 the Interior)
+966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)
Twitter: @KingSalman

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr Walid bin Mohammed bin Saleh Al-Samaani
Ministry of Justice
University Street,
PO Box 7775, Riyadh 11137
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 401 1741 / 402 031

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Interior

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

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

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

ISSA AL-HAMID RISKS LENGTHY PRISON SENTENCE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 2012, the Saudi Arabian authorities have been targeting civil society activists and human rights defenders, including members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), using both the courts and other administrative measures such as the imposition of travel bans as a means to harass, intimidate and impede their work in the defence of human rights.

Issa al-Hamid's brothers, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid are both founding members of ACPRA who have been detained for their peaceful human rights activism. Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid was sentenced on 13 October 2015 to nine years in prison followed by a nine-year travel ban, and a fine of 50,000 Saudi Arabian riyals (about US\$13,300) (see Further Information on UA: 102/14, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/2663/2015/en/>). Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, and another ACPRA co-founder, Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani were sentenced on 9 March 2013 to 10 and 11 years' imprisonment respectively, to be followed by travel bans of equal duration. They had been convicted of a list of offences, such as "breaking allegiance to and disobeying the ruler", "questioning the integrity of officials", "seeking to disrupt security and inciting disorder by calling for demonstrations", "disseminating false information to foreign groups", "violating Article 6 of the information technology law" and "forming an unlicensed organization" (understood to be ACPRA) (see further information on UA 257/12, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/010/2013/en/>). The court also ordered the disbanding of ACPRA, confiscation of its property and the closure of its social media accounts.

Since February 2014, the authorities have used the new counter-terror law to further target human rights activists and peaceful dissidents. At least two ACPRA members have seen their trials reopen under the new counter-terror law at the SCC, a special security and counter-terrorism court whose jurisdiction and procedures are unspecified, years after they had been sentenced and while serving their sentence on the same charges under other laws or by other courts. Three other ACPRA members were brought to trial before the SCC after the new counter-terror law was introduced, including Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid.

A number of other independent human rights activists, writers and dissidents have also been harassed by the Saudi Arabian authorities. Lawyer Waleed Abu al-Khair, a human rights defender, was arrested on 15 April 2014 after a hearing before the SCC. He is now serving a 15-year prison sentence, to be followed by 15-year travel ban and a fine, after the court found him guilty of "disobeying the ruler and seeking to remove his legitimacy", "insulting the judiciary and questioning the integrity of judges", "setting up an unlicensed organization", "harming the reputation of the state by communicating with international organizations" and "preparing, storing and sending information that harms public order" (see UA 98/14, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/1546/2015/en/>).

In March 2016, both Mohanna Abdulaziz al-Hubail and Alaa Brinji were sentenced by the SCC to years in prison for their writings. Saudi Arabian writer and Islamic scholar Mohanna Abdulaziz al-Hubail was sentenced in absentia by the SCC to six years in prison to be followed by a travel ban of equal length. He was convicted of a number of 'offences' including violating Article 6 of the Anti-Cyber Crime Law by "insulting the state and its rulers" and "being in solidarity with imprisoned members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association" (ACRPA) on Twitter. He was also found guilty of inciting and taking part in demonstrations and calling for the release of prisoners of conscience. The court also ordered the closure of his Twitter account. Saudi Arabian journalist Alaa Brinji was sentenced to five years in prison by the SCC after being convicted for posts on Twitter, some of which were in support of Saudi Arabian women's right to drive cars, human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience.

Name: Issa al-Hamid
Gender m/f: m

UA: 86/16 Index: MDE 23/3804/2016 Issue Date: 12 April 2016

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

