



William's Desk

February 8, 2012

Mr. Malick El Hadji Sow
Chairperson
Working Group on Arbitrary Detention
C/o OHCHR-UNOG
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Re: The ongoing detention of human rights activist Dr. Al-Hashimi

Dear Mr. Malick El Hadji Sow,

I am deeply concerned over the imprisonment of a Saudi human rights activist and faculty member at King Abdulaziz University, Dr. Sa'ud al-Hashimi by Saudi officials in February 2007. His detention was quite evidently due to his work on promoting civil liberties, democracy and constitutional reform in Saudi Arabia. He has been denied all his fundamental rights guaranteed by international conventions and statutory Saudi laws. As you are likely aware, this case transpires within the context of Saudi Arabia's ongoing and unacceptable arbitrary detention of activists.

Dr. Sa'ud Mukhtar Al-Hashimi, 47, was arrested in Saudi Arabia by Saudi secret forces and has been detained since 2 February 2007. He has been a prominent figure of the "reformers" movement which has called for constitutional reform and democratic rights in the country. Over the past five years, he has been physically and psychologically tortured and was not brought before a judge until 2011.

For the first 14 months of his detention in Ruwais prison, he was in solitary confinement and severely tortured. In June 2009, Dr. Al-Hashimi began a hunger strike in protest of his unfair detention. This prompted retaliation from Saudi authorities by torturing him with beatings and long periods of cold and hot temperatures. He was held in a cell without light and was denied medical care which has caused his diabetes and chronic digestive disease to severely deteriorate since his detention.

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In January 2010, after being transferred to a prison in Riyadh, he was told he would be brought before a judge. This prompted him to hire a lawyer, but in early November 2010, Dr. Al-Hashimi was tortured using electric shock in retribution for attempting to have a fair trial. Finally, in January 2011, as his condition worsened, he was brought before a judge twice. During this period he was tortured by being stripped and held in a cold room for four days in an effort to pressure him into accepting the charges against him. The judge finally sentenced the Doctor on 22 November 2011 to 30 years' imprisonment, 30 years travel ban following his release and a fine of 2 million riyals (approximately £342,000). To this day, he remains in solitary confinement and is constantly monitored by a camera.

Over the past three years, Dr. Al-Hashimi has been severely tortured and placed in solitary confinement. He has experienced beatings, electric shock, and long periods of freezing then hot temperatures, shackled in a cell with no light and limited visitation rights. Since detention, he has been systematically denied access to any medical care which has subsequently caused his health to severely deteriorate.

I urge you to call on the Saudi government to look into the matter and arrange for his immediate release and an apology for his detention. This ongoing detention of individuals who are clearly trying to express their right to freedom of speech in your country must not be tolerated. Please call on the Saudi government to provide Dr. Al-Hashimi with his basic human rights and release him from this illegal imprisonment.

I look forward to hearing back from you regarding this urgent matter.

Yours sincerely,

William Nicholas Gomes

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