

Saudi Arabia

For the last nine years, citizens of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have increasingly called for modernization, democratization, and the renewal of religious discourse to pave the way for the necessary institutional, constitutional, and legislative reforms to end discrimination against women and the Shiite minority. Rights activists have boldly established independent human rights organizations despite the official authorities' hostile stance towards independent civil society. The authorities' response to these calls has changed according to different levels of international pressure for reform following the terrorist attacks of September 2001. At times the government has shown a degree of tolerance, while at other times it has severely repressed reform advocates and independent human rights activists.

King Abdullah's assumption of power in August 2005 raised expectations of possible reform given his discourse, which focuses on four issues closely linked to human rights: women's rights, freedom of expression, a fair judicial system, and religious tolerance. The king's reformist discourse has allowed a broader margin for differences of opinion and permitted the emergence of voices critical of government policies, provided the critique does not extend to the king or the ruling family or encroach on Islam, religious institutions, or clerics. Nevertheless, the king's discourse is not matched by sufficient political will and has been met with resistance by extremely conservative factions inside the ruling family, the security

establishment, and the religious establishment. The Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, known as the religious police, has proved to be a crucial tool for these factions in suppressing personal liberties and harassing those whose views differ from their own, particularly among the Shiite community, whose right to practice their religious rites and hold religious festivals remains under constant attack despite royal rhetoric about religious tolerance and a national dialogue involving all sects and communities.

In light of the more recent decline in international pressure, the king's reformist discourse has not been translated into institutional or legislative reforms. Indeed, in the last five years, there have been increasing assaults on freedom of expression, and reform advocates and activists documenting human rights abuses have become targets for arbitrary detention, torture, unfair trials, and travel bans. The authorities continue to forbid the establishment of political parties and human rights organizations, even as they attempted to win international favor with the establishment of a rights organization whose members are closely linked to the government, including government officials and members of the Consultative Assembly. The authorities also established the Human Rights Commission, a government human rights directorate.¹ Amid rising fear of the spread of the Arab revolutions, 2011 saw less tolerance and increasing crackdowns on demonstrations and collective protests in the kingdom.²

The year 2012 saw no improvement of the deteriorating human rights situation. Indeed, repression increased, particularly in relation to human rights defenders and political dissidents. The authorities also continued to deal harshly with all forms of peaceful demonstrations and protests regardless of their size. Severe measures were used to crack down on demonstrations and protests by Shiite citizens, who continued to suffer from systematic discrimination and restrictions on their right to practice their religion.

¹ On the general state of human rights in Saudi Arabia, see the previous four annual reports issued by the CIHRS: From Exporting Terrorism to Exporting Repression, 2008 report, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=2713&lang=en>>; Bastion of Impunity, Mirage of Reform, 2009 report, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=1119&lang=en>>; Roots of Unrest in the Arab World, 2010 report, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=1164&lang=en>>; Fractured Walls, New Horizons, 2011 report, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=2539&lang=en>>. See also, Human Rights Watch, Looser Rein, Uncertain Gain, Sep. 27, 2010, <<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/09/27/looser-rein-uncertain-gain-0>>.

² See the relevant chapter in CIHRS, Fractured Walls, New Horizons.

New specialized anti-terrorism criminal courts were used to try human rights defenders, regime critics, and internet activists. Websites continued to be blocked if they included any information about arrests of and abuses committed against those involved in peaceful protests. Grave abuses in prisons and detention facilities persisted, as did physical and psychological torture. Demeaning corporal penalties continued to be applied which constitute violations of the Convention Against Torture, to which Saudi Arabia is a party.

Harassment of Human Rights Defenders and Reformists

In keeping with its hostile stance on the establishment of independent human rights organizations, in early 2012 the authorities refused to license the Adala Center for Human Rights, based on the claim that the center's objectives did not comply with existing regulations on associations and charitable institutions. The founders of the center appealed the decision before the Administrative Court.³ Waleed Abulkhair, the president of the Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia (MHRSA), applied for a license as well but was rejected, after which the organization was registered in Canada. An application was then filed with the Saudi monarch to allow the organization to operate in the kingdom, but no response was received.⁴

The Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA) was subjected to the most abuse. On April 10, the Riyadh Specialized Criminal Court sentenced activist and ACPRA founder Mohammed Saleh al-Bejadi to four years in prison and banned him from travel for an additional five years after his conviction on charges of participating in the establishment of a human rights association, sullyng the state's reputation in the media, calling on the families of political detainees to demonstrate and stage sit-ins, questioning the independence of the judiciary, and possessing banned books. The judgment was issued in a secret session more than one year after al-Bejadi was arrested and without due process guarantees, particularly the right to an attorney.⁵

³ Adala Center for Human Rights, "Mu'assisu al-'adala ya'taridun 'ala rafid talabihim ta'sis markaz li-huquq al-insan," Jan. 23, 2012, <<http://www.adalacenter.net/?act=artc&id=656>>, and "Masirat tasjil markaz al-'adala li-huquq al-insan," <<http://www.adalacenter.net/index.php?act=sec&pg=43>>.

⁴ Gulf Center for Human Rights, "Head of Monitor of Human Rights at Risk of Being Targeted by Authorities following Successful Registration of the Organization in Canada," May 16, 2012, <<http://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/143>>.

⁵ CIHRS, "Mudafi' Sa'udi 'an huquq al-insan yuwajih khatar al-sijn li-ta'awunihi ma' majlis al-umam al-muttahida li-huquq al-insan," intervention at the 21st session of the UN Human

Saudi Arabia continues to use the Specialized Criminal Court, established in 2008 to consider terrorism cases, to prosecute peaceful dissidents and rights activists on politicized charges without regard for due process and without clearly defining the jurisdiction of these courts or their methods of operation.⁶

Two other activists with ACPRA—Abdullah al-Hamed and Mohammed al-Qahtani—were also referred to trial on June 11 and June 18 respectively; they faced several charges, including rebelling against the ruler, questioning the judiciary, establishing an organization without a permit, undermining the public order, smearing the reputation of state officials, sowing civil strife and division, inciting to the dissolution of allegiance to the king, and inciting international organizations against the kingdom.⁷ This came after al-Qahtani cooperated with and submitted information to the UN Human Rights Council. The judgment in the trial of al-Qahtani and al-Hamed was expected on January 16, 2013.⁸ Another activist with the same organization, Abd al-Karim Youssef al-Khidr, was questioned and is expected to be charged and prosecuted as well. Activist Fowzan al-Harbi was prohibited from travel with no cause given on May 22, shortly before he planned to attend a human rights conference.⁹ In June, the Saudi authorities placed travel bans on several activists, among them Abd al-Mohsen al-Ayyashi, Mamdouh al-Zaydi, Hussein al-Zaydi, and Mohammed al-Huwayl, after they signed and

Rights Council, <<http://bit.ly/T5j6xk>>; Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Human Rights Activist Sentenced to Four Years’ Jail following Secret Trial,” Apr. 16, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/saudi-arabia-human-rights-activist-sentenced-four-years-jail-following-secr>>.

⁶ Human Rights Watch, “Saudi Arabia: Abolish Terrorism Court,” Apr. 27, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/27/saudi-arabia-abolish-terrorism-court>>.

⁷ Article 6 of the law on the suppression of information crimes was used as the basis for charges in these crimes, see: <http://www.citc.gov.sa/arabic/RulesandSystems/CITCSyste/Documents/LA_004_%20A_%20Anti-Cyber%20Crime%20Law.pdf>.

⁸ Gulf Center for Human Rights, “al-Mamlaka al-‘Arabiya al-Sa’udiya: istimrar muhakamat mudafi’i huquq al-insan,” Jan. 4, 2013, <<http://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/311>>; ACPRA, “Bayan ‘an waqa’i’ al-jalsa al-‘ashira li-l-muhakama al-siyasiya li-l-mutalibin bi-shurut al-bay’a al-shar’iya wa huquq al-insan,” Dec. 31, 2012, <http://www.acpra-hr.net/news_view_205.html>.

⁹ CIHRS, “Mudafi’ Sa’udi ‘an huquq al-insan yuwajih khatar al-sijn li-ta’awunihi ma’ majlis al-umam al-muttahida li-huquq al-insan”; Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), “al-Sultat al-Sa’udi tuhakim nashitan huquqiyah,” July 4, 2012, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=56117>>; Front Line Defenders, “Saudi Arabia: Human Rights Defender Mr Fowzan al-Harbi Prohibited from Travelling,” May 28, 2012, <<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/18445>>.

published a political statement issued by ACPRA titled “Citizens: The oath of allegiance has conditions, so let’s demand them.”¹⁰

On December 12, Sheikh Suliman al-Reshoudi, the president of ACPRA, was arrested only hours after the publication of his lecture on the status of demonstrations and sit-ins in Islamic law, in which he affirmed the legitimacy of peaceful demonstrations and sit-ins for the purpose of demanding rights.¹¹

Meanwhile, the trial of rights activist Fadhil al-Manasif, a founding member of the Adala Center for Human Rights and who has been detained since October 2011, continues, after he was charged with participating in peaceful sit-ins and marches in al-Awwamiya. He is being prosecuted before a specialized anti-terrorism court.¹²

On April 10, rights activist Mekhlef al-Shammari learned that he had been banned from travel while attempting to cross the King Fahd Bridge into Bahrain. The authorities had issued the secret order banning him from travel for ten years following his release on bail in February 2010. Al-Shammari was again imprisoned in June 2010 because of his opinions; he had been charged with writing material that troubled others.¹³

The authorities similarly banned activist Waleed Sami Abulkhair, the president of the MHRSA, from travel pursuant to an order issued by the Interior Ministry on March 12. He is also being tried on charges of showing contempt for the judiciary and impugning the kingdom’s reputation by giving false information to an international organization.¹⁴ Abulkhair has

¹⁰ Field statements from the MHRSA and ACPRA. To read the statement see, ACPRA, “ACPRA Calls upon Saudi Citizens to Demand Allegiance Conditions,” June 22, 2012, <http://www.acpra-rights.org/news_view_178.html>.

¹¹ ACPRA, “al-Sultat al-Sa’udiya ta’taqil al-shaykh Sulayman al-Rashudi ra’is jam’iyat al-huquq al-madaniya wa-l-siyasiya,” Dec. 13, 2012, <http://www.acpra-hr.net/news_view_202.html>; Gulf Center for Human Rights, “Sa’udiya: i’tiqal al-muhami wa-l-qadi al-sabiq ra’is jam’iya al-huquq al-madaniya wa-l-siyasiya,” Dec. 16, 2012, <<http://gc4hr.org/news/view/300>>.

¹² Rasid, “al-Nashit al-Munasif yumaththil amam al-mahkama fi jalsa thaniya,” May 13, 2012, <<http://rasid.com/artc.php?id=49293>>.

¹³ CIHRS, “Ziyada muqliqa li-l-qam’ wa-l-hujum ‘ala-l-mujtama’ al-madani fi mintaqat al-khalij,” intervention at the 21st session of the UN Human Rights Council, Sep. 2012, <<http://bit.ly/QzMOgh>>; International Center for Supporting Rights and Freedoms (ICSRF), “al-Nashit al-huquqi wa-l-katib al-shaykh Makhlaq al-Shamari mamnu’ min al-safar li-muddat ‘ashar sanawat,” Apr. 10, 2012, <http://www.icsrf.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=161:2012-04-10-10-59-15&catid=43:saudi-arabia&Itemid=135>; Adala Center, “al-Hurriya al-mukabbala,” monthly report for Mar.-Apr. 2012, <<http://www.adalacenter.net/?act=artc&id=663>>.

¹⁴ CIHRS, “Ziyada muqliqa li-l-qam’ wa-l-hujum ‘ala-l-mujtama’ al-madani fi mintaqat al-khalij”; Adala Center, “al-Hurriya al-mukabbala.”

also been repeatedly summoned for security questioning because of his activities.¹⁵

On June 17, the authorities detained activist Raef Badawi and referred him to court on charges of creating a liberal network after the network he established declared May 7 to be liberalism day in Saudi Arabia and he wrote a blog entry about liberalism.¹⁶ During his trial, the Jeddah Criminal Court amended the charge against him to be defamation of Islam and disobedience of the ruler. In the session of September 17, the court referred him to a higher court—the Jeddah General Court—after it added the charge of apostasy. The court asked Badawi to repent to avoid a death sentence, but he refused.¹⁷

Torture

The security authorities use various means of torture against detainees, including beatings with hoses and wires on the hands and feet, electroshocks to sensitive areas of the body, and forced standing for long periods with the arms raised. Such practices are used during interrogations to force confessions.¹⁸ Psychological torture is also used, including threats of rape or the insult of detainees' family or their religious beliefs, if they are Shiites.¹⁹ Signs of torture are visible on the bodies of released detainees,²⁰ and weight loss is common.²¹ One of the most notorious cases was that of Musa Jafar al-Mabyuq, who was left emaciated and mentally impaired by the violent physical and psychological torture to which he was subjected.²²

¹⁵ Field testimonies from MHRSA.

¹⁶ CIHRS, "Ziyada muqliqa li-l-qam' wa-l-hujum 'ala-l-mujtama' al-madani fi mintaqat al-khalij"; Adala Center, "al-Hurriya al-mukabbala"; ANHRI, "'Ala-l-nizam al-Sa'udi al-tawaqquf fawran 'an mulahaqat nushata' bi-tuham muzayyafa," June 26, 2012, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=55783>>; ANHRI, "al-Sultat al-Sa'udi tuhakim nashitan huquqiyan." For the liberal network established by Badawi, see <<http://www.humanf.org:8686/vb/>>.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Website Editor Facing Death Penalty," Dec. 22, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/12/22/saudi-arabia-website-editor-facing-death-penalty>>;

¹⁸ Adala Center, "al-Hurriya al-mukabbala."

¹⁹ Amnesty International, "Dissident Voices Stifled in the Eastern Province," May 28, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/011/2012/en>>.

²⁰ Adala Center, "al-Hurriya al-mukabbala."

²¹ Center for the Defense of Human Rights in the Arabian Peninsula (CDHRAP), "al-Mu'taqal Musa Ja'far al-Mabyuq yata'arrad li-l-ta'dhib al-jasadi wa-l-nafsi," May 12, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/emS5iI>>.

²² Ibid.

In another case, Nazeer al-Majed was beaten, electrocuted, punched on his face, and kicked all over his body. He was whipped on his back with a sharp object and forced to stand in a painful position for four hours with his arms raised and his legs shackled; security personnel also beat his head against a wall.²³ In early 2012, Hussein al-Suleiman was beaten by an officer after he arrived bound hand and foot at the General Directorate of Investigations. His left leg was broken as a result, and the officer threatened to break his other leg.²⁴

A group of Ethiopians were arrested on December 15, 2011 for holding a prayer service in a private home during a Christian holiday. The women were transferred to the Buraiman Prison, where they were forced to strip and subjected to a cavity search by a policewoman, ostensibly to detect any concealed contraband. They were also forced to put their fingerprints on a document they were not permitted to read, which incriminated them for mingling with men who were not their husbands.²⁵

Despite the international ban on degrading punishment under the Convention Against Torture, to which Saudi Arabia is a party, the kingdom continues to apply lashing as a sentence. Egyptian national Nagla Wafa was sentenced to 500 lashes and five years in prison in May after she had been arbitrarily detained without trial for 20 months. According to reports from rights groups, she was given no legal support until the sentence was issued. Wafa appealed to the appellate court, which vacated the sentence due to the lack of incriminating evidence, yet the sentence against her was upheld during the retrial. She faced ill treatment in prison and was denied visits and contact with her family for six months.²⁶

Egyptian attorney Ahmed al-Gizawi may be sentenced to death after the authorities accused him of possessing illicit drugs upon his arrival at the Jeddah airport on April 17. It was feared that measures were taken against him because he filed a suit with the Egyptian judiciary demanding the

²³ Amnesty International, "Dissident Voices Stifled in the Eastern Province."

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Christians Arrested at Private Prayers," Jan. 30, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/01/30/saudi-arabia-christians-arrested-private-prayer>>.

²⁶ Alkarama, "Saudi Arabia: UN Asked to Intervene with Saudi Authorities to Stop Flogging of Egyptian Woman," Aug. 6, 2012, <en.alkarama.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=988:saudi-arabia-un-asked-to-intervene-with-saudi-authorities-to-stop-flogging-of-egyptian-woman&catid=33:communiqu&Itemid=179>.

release of Egyptians detained in Saudi Arabia, naming the Saudi monarch in the suit.²⁷

Freedom of Assembly

The authorities detained hundreds of people in security sweeps targeting participants of demonstrations that began erupting in the kingdom in 2011. Reports in April estimated that some 600 people had been detained, some of whom spent more than six months in prison without charge or trial. Many of them were denied family visits despite their long confinement, and at least 33 of them were fired from their jobs.²⁸ Many others who had been involved in protests also faced retaliatory measures such as dismissals and garnished wages.²⁹

In January 2012, the Interior Ministry put two documents into effect that permit disciplinary measures leading to the dismissal of public servants who criticize state policy. One of the documents calls for “raising awareness among public servants of their occupational responsibilities and duties and their obligation not to publish, issue, or sign statements or speeches that oppose state policy or are inconsistent with fundamental state regulations.” The document adds that “measures shall be taken before the competent body to demand the dismissal of the employee in accordance with the occupational regulations to which the employee is subject.” These directives were used against those who took part in peaceful demonstrations or assemblies.³⁰

In 2012, crackdowns were largely directed at demonstrations by Shiites in the Eastern Province, where a number of demonstrators were killed as a result. For example, Zuhair al-Said was shot and killed by police during a demonstration on February 11 in al-Awwamiya after armored police vehicles intervened to disperse a march protesting the death of Mounir al-Maidani, who had died in the hospital after he was injured by security forces on

²⁷ CDHRAP, “al-Gizawi yu’akkid bara’atahu wa yattahim al-iddi’a’ al-Sa’udi bi-l-talfiq,” Sep. 6, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/ESY8Ju>>; Alkarama, “Saudi Arabia: Fears for Well-Being of Recently Arrested Egyptian Lawyer,” Apr. 18, 2012, <http://en.alkarama.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=904:saudi-arabia-fears-for-well-being-of-recently-arrested-egyptian-lawyer-&catid=33:communiqu&Itemid=179>.

²⁸ Adala Center, “al-Hurriya al-mukabbala”; according to the Adala Center, as of mid-August 24 minors were detained. See <<http://www.adalacenter.net/?act=artc&id=688>>.

²⁹ Amnesty International, “Dissident Voices Stifled in the Eastern Province.”

³⁰ Ibid.

February 9.³¹ The same town saw another demonstration on July 9 in protest of the detention of Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, a prominent Shiite leader. The police dispersed the demonstration with live ammunition, killing two and injuring dozens.³² On July 26, dozens of demonstrators were injured in al-Qatif when the police used live ammunition to disperse another peaceful assembly in support al-Nimr. Activist Mohammed al-Shakhouri was detained; he was one of 23 people wanted for arrest in connection with their participation in demonstrations over the last year.³³ On September 17, a criminal court in Qatif sentenced three demonstrators to prison and lashes on charges of taking part in anti-state assemblies.³⁴

On July 13, ten women from the al-Muattaq family were arrested while peacefully protesting the continued detention of their family members. All but two of the women, both minors, were later released. The investigating body issued an order to hold the two girls and that they be transferred to a facility for the care of minors in Riyadh; their families were not informed. The girls were questioned without an attorney or guardian present, and the director of the local investigation and prosecution directorate refused to release them on bail and denied them visits or outside contact.³⁵

On March 7, many female students at King Khaled University in Abha, located in the southern part of the kingdom, were injured when security patrols and the religious police intervened to disperse a protest they were holding to demand improved educational conditions.³⁶ On September 14, the police detained demonstrators protesting the film “Innocence of Islam,” which they considered to be blasphemous and insulting to the prophet

³¹ CDHRAP, “Quwwat al-kayan al-Sa’udi taqtul al-shabb Munir al-Maydani,” Feb. 10, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/9XLVoh>>; CDHRAP, “Istishhad shabb than min al-‘Awwamiya ‘ala yad quwwat al-amn,” Feb. 10, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/OeLGy6>>.

³² Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia Must Charge or Release Detained Dissident Cleric,” Aug. 9, 2012, <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/news/saudi-arabia-must-charge-or-release-detained-dissident-cleric-2012-08-09>>;

³³ CDHRAP, “Isabat ‘adad min al-muhtajjin ithr tafriq al-amn tajammu’an fi-l-Qatif,” July 28, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/ouxPDz>>.

³⁴ Asharq Center for Human Rights, “Markaz al-sharq yutalib al-sultat al-Sa’udiya bi-l-kaff ‘an al-muhakamat ‘ala khalfiyat al-tazahur al-silmi,” Sep. 20, 2012, <http://alsharqcenter.com/news/local_news/675>.

³⁵ CDHRAP, “I’tiqal 8 nisa’ min ‘a’ilat al-mu’attaq ba’d tazahurihinna li-l-ifraj ‘an dhawihinna,” July 25, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/y5DKeC>>.

³⁶ CDHRAP, “Quwwat al-amn al-Sa’udiya tajtah kulliyatay al-tarbiya wa-l-adab bi-jami’at al-malak Khalid Abha,” Mar. 10, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/PoA2t1>>; BBC Arabic, “al-Sa’udiya: tahqiq fi isabat ‘adad min al-talibat al-jami’iyat tazaharna li-tahsin zurufihinna,” Mar. 8, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2012/03/120304_saudi_women_demo.shtml>.

Mohammed, in Bureida, northeast of Riyadh; they were released three days later.³⁷

On October 7, a court convicted 15 people charged with incitement to chaos and strife and illegal assembly after they took part in a demonstration on September 23 in front of the al-Tarafiya Prison in al-Qasim in central Saudi Arabia seeking the release of their relatives who had been detained for long periods of time. The defendants received sentences of 3 to 15 days in prison, as well as suspended sentences of 50-90 lashes and prison terms of two-five months.³⁸

On November 20, security forces arrested 15 citizens who organized a protest in front of the Human Rights Commission in the capital to demand the release of their relatives who were being held without trial. The protestors were beaten and kicked while being taken to the investigations directorate for questioning. The security forces also detained 22 women and children taking part in the protest. They were later released after being compelled to sign a pledge not to take part in such protests again.³⁹

Rights sources estimated that at the end of 2012, 175 people, among them 22 children, were still detained in Saudi prisons in connection with the suppression of peaceful demonstrations. It was estimated that at least 15 people had been killed in the context of crackdowns on demonstrations between March 2011 and the end of 2012.⁴⁰

Growing Suppression of the Shiite Minority

The Shiite and Ismaili minorities⁴¹ continued to face numerous arbitrary restrictions on their exercise of the right to religious freedom. They further suffer from official discrimination in government employment and

³⁷ CDHRAP, "al-Sultat al-amniya ta'qil mutazahirin bi-tuhmat nusrat al-rasul," Sep. 16, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/ppHsm0>>.

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Stop Prosecuting Peaceful Protestors," Oct. 28, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/10/28/saudi-arabia-stop-prosecuting-peaceful-protesters>>; Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia Must Halt Attempts to Stifle Peaceful Protest," Oct. 16, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/saudi-arabia-must-halt-attempts-stifle-peaceful-protest-2012-10-16>>.

³⁹ Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia Must Release or Charge Detained Peaceful Protestors," Nov. 28, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/saudi-arabia-must-release-or-charge-detained-peaceful-protesters-2012-11-28>>.

⁴⁰ Adala Center, "Markaz al-'adala yusdir ihsa'iya jadida 'an al-mu'taqalin," Dec. 31, 2012, <<http://www.adalacenter.net/?act=artc&id=705>>.

⁴¹ The Shiite community is centered in the Eastern Province, while Ismailis live largely in Jizan in the southern part of the kingdom. It is estimated that the two communities comprise 10-15 percent of the population.

education: No Shiite holds a high government office or a senior security position, and Shiites and Ismailis account for only six members of the 150-member Consultative Assembly. These minorities are also at risk of harassment, arrest, and detention for religious reasons, including for taking part in assemblies, using megaphones outside *husseiniyat*, or taking part in religious festivals or processions. In January, clashes between police and a group of Shiites in Qatif during a religious festival left one Shiite dead and three injured; several people were detained.⁴² On August 3, police opened fire on several residents of Qatif who were taking part in religious festivities held to commemorate the birthday of Imam al-Hassan Bin Ali Bin Abi Taleb; Hussein Youssef al-Qalaf was killed as a result.⁴³

On July 9, the authorities detained well-known cleric Nimr Baqir al-Nimr after pursuing him through the streets of al-Awwamiya in the al-Qatif governorate. Gunfire during the chase caused al-Nimr's car to crash into the wall of a house, injuring him.⁴⁴ He was detained due to his critical opinions of the Saudi regime and the spread of a video in which he criticized the ruling family.⁴⁵

On January 25, a security squad carried out raids in the town of al-Qadih and detained nine Shiites, including men in their 60s. While the elderly detainees were released, the police referred the rest of the detainees to the General Directorate of Investigations, where the government accused them of shooting at police patrols and security personnel.⁴⁶ On September 10, security vehicles surrounded al-Awwamiya in the Qatif governorate in pursuit of Shiite youth included on a list of 23 persons wanted by the Interior Ministry. An exchange of gunfire ensued, injuring four citizens and damaging Shiite-owned property, and several people were arrested. Two cars were also hit with gunfire, killing a driver. The clashes took place two days after the interior minister stated that the judiciary was close to the Qatif-based "lost faction," a reference to the religiously wayward.⁴⁷

⁴² Annual report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2012, <[http://www.uscifr.gov/images/Annual%20Report%20of%20USCIRF%202012\(2\).pdf](http://www.uscifr.gov/images/Annual%20Report%20of%20USCIRF%202012(2).pdf)>.

⁴³ CDHRAP, "Quwwat al-kayan al-Sa'udi taqtul al-shabb Husayn Yusuf al-Qalaf," Aug. 4, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/H9WL6X>>.

⁴⁴ CDHRAP, "al-Sultat al-Sa'udiya ta'taqil al-shaykh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr," July 9, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/zaA0kI>>.

⁴⁵ See the video at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3gsr-8TFNw>>.

⁴⁶ CDHRAP, "Quwwat al-kayan al-Sa'udiya al-amniya ta'taqil 9 muwatinin shi'a fi baldat al-Qadih," Jan. 25, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/8J6s30>>.

⁴⁷ CDHRAP, "Quwwat al-amn taqtahim baldat al-'Awwamiya wa tutliq al-nar 'ashwa'iyen," Sep. 11, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/uEq1V6>>.

The authorities arrested several citizens while they were departing the kingdom. On March 14, Shiite al-Sayyed Murtada Hashim al-Mousawi was detained at the Khafji border crossing on his way to Kuwait.⁴⁸ On March 25, Yasser al-Shuyukh was detained on his way to the UAE in the border district of al-Batha; he was released in early April.⁴⁹ The security authorities accused the men of taking part in peaceful marches in al-Qatif.

On March 18, police in al-Qatif arrested Shiite footballer Ahmed Samir al-Qasla.⁵⁰ On March 22, Shiite youth Abdullah Eissa al-Miyad was detained in connection with his participation in peaceful demonstrations in Qatif. According to testimonies, he was released on October 15.⁵¹

Many Shiites were detained and prosecuted after exercising their right to express their opinions. In March, the authorities arrest minor Jafar Sadeq al-Sadeq and Haidar Hassan al-Mahal, residents of al-Rabiyia, on charges of writing slogans in support of Shiite rights on the town's walls and streets. Al-Sadeq was released in May while al-Mahal continues to be detained at the General Directorate of Investigations in Dammam.⁵² In another case, the Qatif criminal court sentenced Mounir Adel al-Quraysh, a resident of Safwa, to eight months in prison and a fine of 10,000 riyals after he was convicted of undermining state security by sending an SMS on Saudi National Day expressing his solidarity and support of the Bahraini people.⁵³

On April 3, the authorities demolished a mosque in al-Khobar in the Eastern Province on the grounds that it had not been approved by the proper authorities, despite the fact that it was built nearly four decades ago.⁵⁴

On December 16, a Saudi court sentenced well-known Shiite cleric Sheikh Tawfiq al-Amer to three years in prison. Al-Amer had been arrested 17 months earlier due to his repeated reformist calls for a constitutional monarchy, religious liberties, and an end to sectarian discrimination. According to his legal advisor, it is likely that al-Amer would have been

⁴⁸ CDHRAP, "al-Sultat al-Sa'udiya ta'taqil al-shabb al-shi'i al-Sayyid Murtada Hashim al-Musawi," Mar. 14, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/Mgnhz3>>.

⁴⁹ CDHRAP, "Sultat al-kayan al-Sa'udiya ta'taqil al-shabb Yasir al-Shuyukh," Mar. 28, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/AkfBHF>>.

⁵⁰ CDHRAP, "The Saudi Authorities Arrested the Shiite Citizen Ahmed Samir al-Qasla," Mar. 19, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/bUeTzV>>.

⁵¹ CDHRAP, "al-Sultat al-Sa'udiya ta'taqil al-muwatinayn al-shi'iyayn Ahmad al-Dawud wa 'Abdullah 'Isa al-Miyad," Mar. 24, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/qN5ipb>>.

⁵² CDHRAP, "I'tiqal al-muwatinayn Ja'far Sadiq al-Sadiq wa Haydar Hasan al-Mahal," Mar. 12, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/FLfpek>>.

⁵³ CDHRAP, "Mahkamat al-Qatif tusdir hukman ja'iran 'ala-l-muwatin al-shi'i Munir 'Adil al-Quraysh," Mar. 18, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/7d67kp>>.

⁵⁴ Adala Center, "al-Hurriya al-mukabbala."

released if he had signed a pledge to refrain from giving sermons, which he refused to do. The judgment against him also included a five-year travel ban and a ban on preaching.⁵⁵

Freedom of Expression

Almost a year after his arrest on March 11, 2011, Khaled al-Johani was referred to the Specialized Criminal Court on February 22. Although the court ostensibly specializes in terrorism cases, al-Johani was charged with participation in demonstrations and contact with foreign media in order to tarnish the kingdom's reputation.⁵⁶

On February 22, poet and photographer Habib Ali al-Maatiq was arrested at his workplace in al-Qatif because of his supervision of the Fajr Cultural Network, which was shut down the same day; the network had published news and photos of protests in Qatif.⁵⁷ The following day, Hussein Malek al-Salem, the director of the network's website, was detained and moved to the Dammam Prison.⁵⁸ The authorities also blocked the Fajr site.⁵⁹

On February 25, the police in Taif, located in the western part of the country, detained journalist Jalal Mohammed Al Jamal, the director of the Awamia website. He was charged with opposing and inciting to the fall of the state after his website covered demonstrations in the Eastern Province; the authorities also blocked the website.⁶⁰

The authorities issued an order banning the writings of Hamza Kashghari from appearing in Saudi newspapers and periodicals after he posted material on Twitter that the government considered to be defaming to religion. The government later issued an order for his arrest after several people labeled him an unbeliever and others called for his execution or murder.⁶¹ He had

⁵⁵ Rasid, "Mahkama Sa'udiya taqdi bi-sajn al-shaykh al-'Amir thalath sanawat," Dec. 17, 2012, <<http://208.78.41.208/artc.php?id=51718>>; Islam Times, "al-Hukm bi-sajn Tawfiq al-'Amir 3 sanawat wa hazr safarihi 5 a'wam," Dec. 17, 2012, <<http://www.islamtimes.org/vdcjx8e8huqe8vz.3ffu.html>>.

⁵⁶ Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Trial of Riyadh Protestor 'Totally Unwarranted'," Feb. 22, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/saudi-arabia-trial-riyadh-protester-utterly-unwarranted-2012-02-22>>.

⁵⁷ ANHRI, "al-Amn al-Sa'udi ya'taqil al-sha'ir wa-l-musawwir al-futughrafi Habib 'Ali al-Ma'atig," Feb. 28, 2012, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=49766>>.

⁵⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "Three Saudis Arrested for Covering Protests," Mar. 16, 2012, <<http://cpj.org/2012/03/three-saudis-arrested-for-covering-protests.php>>.

⁵⁹ Amnesty International, "Dissident Voices Stifled in the Eastern Province."

⁶⁰ Committee to Protect Journalists, "Three Saudis Arrested for Covering Protests."

⁶¹ CPJ, "Saudi Arabian Columnist under Threat for Twitter Posts," Feb. 9, 2012, <<http://cpj.org/2012/02/saudi-arabian-columnist-under-threat-for-twitter-p.php>>.

fled to Malaysia, where the authorities arrested him in the Kuala Lumpur airport while he was en route to New Zealand to seek asylum. On February 12, he was deported back to Saudi Arabia.⁶²

On December 24, prominent Saudi writer Turki al-Hamad was arrested by order of the interior minister for statements made on Twitter that some considered defamatory to Islam. Al-Hamad's tweets sharply criticized the conduct of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and labeled what he called Islamist currents "neo-Nazis."⁶³

The Specialized Criminal Court sentenced cleric Youssef al-Ahmed to five years in prison and a fine of 100,000 riyals on charges of undermining the public order and publishing material to sow civil strife after he published a video⁶⁴ in July 2011 decrying the practices of the security apparatus and criticizing the detention of women following a sit-in demanding the release of two political activists.⁶⁵ On May 5, the authorities arrested Dr. Ahmed Saad Bin Gharam al-Ghamidi, a professor of modern sciences at Umm al-Qura University and a member of the Islamic Umma Party after he criticized the authorities in posts on Twitter for detaining those with different opinions. He also called for a system of governance chosen by citizens in a free general election.⁶⁶

On May 12, the Cabinet issued a decree limiting journalism to those journalists accredited by the Saudi Journalists Commission based on the pretext of preventing non-professional writers and journalists from making unfounded, false claims.⁶⁷

⁶² Front Line Defenders, "Malaysia/Saudi Arabia: Human Rights Defender Mr Hamza Kashgari Deported to Saudi Arabia Where He Risks Being Sentenced to Death," Feb. 13, 2012, <<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/17387>>.

⁶³ ANHRI, "al-Sa'udiya: al-shabaka al-'Arabiya tastankir i'tiqal al-katib al-Sa'udi Turki al-Hamad," Dec. 25, 2012, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=66584>>; al-Hewar, "Tawqif al-katib al-Sa'udi Turki al-Hamad yuhyi al-jadal hawl 'alaqat al-sulta bi-l-din," Jan. 3, 2013, <<http://www.ahewar.org/news/s.news.asp?nid=895765>>; Doha Center for Media Freedom, "Saudi Writer Arrested over Blasphemous Tweets," Dec. 26, 2012, <<http://www.dc4mf.org/en/content/saudi-writer-arrested-over-blasphemous-tweets>> and "Saudi Activists Urge Release of Writer Who 'Insulted' Islam," Jan. 3, 2013, <<http://www.dc4mf.org/en/content/saudi-activists-urge-release-writer-who-insulted-islam>>.

⁶⁴ See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqmpInlVsy0>>.

⁶⁵ Saudi Press Agency, "al-Mahkama al-jiza'iya al-mutakhassisa tusdir ahkaman ibtida'iyan fi-l-qadiya al-marfu'a min al-iddi'a al-'amm bi-haqq sab'a muttahaman," Apr. 11, 2012, <<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewphotonews.php?id=987918&pic=>>>.

⁶⁶ CDHRAP, "al-Markaz al-dawli li-da'm al-huquq wa-l-hurriyat yudin i'tiqal Ahmad Bin Sa'd Bin Gharam al-Ghamidi," May 15, 2012, <<http://goo.gl/XAhwrr>>.

⁶⁷ Saudi Press Agency, "Khadim al-haramayn al-sharifayn yar'as majlis al-wuzara'," May 21, 2012, <<http://www.spa.gov.sa/details.php?id=1000553>>.

The authorities also continued to block online content, bringing the number of blocked political sites and sites dedicated to rights issues to 25.⁶⁸

Discrimination against Women

Women continue to occupy a lower status than men in Saudi Arabia. Under the law, they are treated as minors and subjected to the authority of their guardians, who make decisions affecting some of the most vital areas of their lives, such as work, education, marriage, and travel. The government did not uphold the commitments it made before the UN Human Rights Council during its 2009 Universal Periodic Review to end male custodianship of women, despite the fact that the next periodic review of Saudi Arabia will be held next year.⁶⁹ Women are still banned from working in the judiciary, the public prosecution, and the legal profession.⁷⁰

The Saudi authorities prohibited Saudi female athletes from participating in the Olympic games of 2012 in London. Following broad international criticism, however, the kingdom reconsidered and declared that women would participate in the games, though they were restricted to events that “are appropriate for the nature of women, meet the standards of women’s decency, and don’t contradict Islamic law.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Adala Center, “Qa’ima bi-ba’d al-mawaqi’ al-mahjuba min dakhil al-Sa’udiya,” Aug. 7, 2012, <<http://www.adalacenter.net/?act=sec&pg=39>>; ANHRI, “al-Sa’udiya: al-shabaka al-‘Arabiya tudin hajb mawqa’ al-saha al-‘arabiya,” July 10, 2012, <<http://www.anhri.net/?p=56446>>;

⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012>>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch, “Saudi Arabia/IOC: Women’s Olympic Debut Only First Step,” Mar. 23, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/22/saudi-arabiaioc-women-s-olympic-debut-only-first-step>>; Human Rights Watch, “IOC/Saudi Arabia: End Ban on Women in Sport,” Feb. 15, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/15/iocsaudi-arabia-end-ban-women-sport>>; Human Rights and Democracy: The 2011 Foreign and Commonwealth Report, <<http://fcohrdreport.readandcomment.com/>>.

