



Mohammed Fahad al-Qahtani

Human rights defender and economist

Date of birth:

25 October 1965

Profession:

Economics professor, human rights defender and co-founder of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA).



Status:

Detained past sentence expiry; forcibly disappeared



Date of sentencing and arrest:

9 March 2013



Sentence:

10 years in prison and a 10-year travel ban



Further case background



Case notes, including rights violations:

In 2009 al-Qahtani and ten other activists set up the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA). Its aim was to promote human rights in Saudi Arabia, and it called for political reforms, an elected parliament, and independent legal institutions that would protect citizens' rights and enforce government accountability. One of ACPRA's key functions was to monitor and document human rights abuses, in particular the practice of torture by state agents and mass arrests of protesters. Al-Qahtani was arrested during a crackdown on human rights activists in June 2012; in September 2015 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued legal Opinion No. 38/2015 declaring his detention arbitrary. Since then, independent UN experts have called time and again for the immediate release of al-Qahtani and other detained ACPRA members. Al-Qahtani has staged a number of hunger strikes in protest at harassment by the prison authorities, including holding him in a ward with detainees suffering from mental health issues, some of whom have been violent towards him, and denying him family contact and access to books and medication. Al-Qahtani completed his prison sentence in November 2022, yet continues to be arbitrarily detained. In fact, he has been held incommunicado, being denied any family contact since 24 October 2022, with the authorities holding him incommunicado.



Summary of judicial proceedings:

Al-Qahtani was sentenced on 9 March 2013 by the Criminal Court in Riyadh to 10 years in prison and a 10-year travel ban, for offences related to his human rights work including "accusing the judicial and legal system of lack of independence and questioning their integrity"; "inciting international organisations against the Saudi government by disseminating false information"; and "using the internet to disseminate opinions, petitions, and statements against the government". The court also ordered the dissolution of ACPRA.



Take action:

The Saudi authorities are susceptible to international pressure, which when applied sufficiently and in coordinated fashion can lead to human rights victories on the ground, such as the release of prisoners of conscience. Conversely, when outside pressure is relaxed, the Saudi leadership reverts to its repressive ways with a sense of impunity.

There has been significant support for Mohammed so far, including among the human rights community. However, further support is needed. Here are some more ways that you can help push for his release:



1- Tweet

You can [tweet](#) in solidarity with Mohammed using the hashtag #FreeAlQahtani.



Sample tweets here



2- Write to the Saudi embassy

The Saudi authorities are refusing to provide al-Qahtani's family with information about his fate and whereabouts. You can call on them to urgently provide information and release al-Qahtani by [writing](#) to the Saudi Arabia embassy in your country of residence.



Sign it here



3- Write to Members of the US Congress

Mohammed's family live in the United States, and so the US government, a close ally of Saudi Arabia, has a responsibility and the leverage with which to help secure his release. If you are based in the US, you can [write](#) to your local Member of Congress to encourage them to call on the government to take action.



Sample letter