



ALQST (London - 25 November 2018): Saudi Arabia - Now, more than ever, the international community must recognise human rights defenders; we must repeatedly call out their names

On 29 May 2018, following the Saudi authorities most recent wave of arbitrary arrests - of women's rights activists - ALQST launched a [campaign](#) calling on, amongst others, partner NGOs, national governments and human rights supporters all over the world, to celebrate Saudi Arabia's human rights heroes by nominating them for awards and prizes; and by putting their names in the public domain. ALQST renews that call.

On 9 October 2018, English PEN's Pinter Prize was awarded to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. She, in turn, named writer and activist, Waleed Abulkhair Abu al-Khair as PEN's International Writer of Courage for 2018. On 23 November 2018, the Right Livelihood Award - often called the Alternative Nobel - named Saudi Arabian human rights defenders Abdullah al-Hamid, Mohammad Fahad al-Qahtani and - once again - Waleed Abu al-Khair as its 2018 Laureates.

Taking part in both events, Yahya Assiri, Director of ALQST said:

"We welcome and thank English PEN and the Right Livelihood Award for their recognition of these three men, their courageous work and especially the price they have paid for calling for justice and human rights."

Assiri added:

"But we need far more. Saudi Arabian government leaders are responsible for gross, systematic human rights violations yet travel the world, smiling, apparently safe in their impunity. That is why we renew our May 2018 call. We appeal - urgently - to all those with a stake in the human rights project, to promote Saudi activists as internationally recognised heroes and role models, so that the younger generation see the inherent legitimacy and honour in the

ideals of resisting injustice and promoting human rights as rights for all. Let's keep their names alive, so that they and the world understand the oppression they face. The assault on human dignity unfolding in Saudi Arabia can no longer be covered up or wished away by public relations campaigns, elite political connections or oil and arms deals. It can no longer be business as usual."

In its May 2018 [campaign](#), ALQST called on partners, parliaments, willing governments; foundations and both individuals and groups to nominate activists for human rights awards and prizes; for those willing in local governments to name streets or parks after activists; for those in media to commission or write books and articles about them; to tell their stories, say by making films. ALQST [noted](#) that they have spent their lives doing what they believed in, as a result of which they are now behind bars.

Background

Amongst those for whom ALQST seeks (greater) recognition, there are the members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association, or ACPRA: Abdullah al-Hamid (see above) Mohamed al-Qahtani (see above); Mohamed al-Bejadi, who has been imprisoned three times, and who, when the authorities asked if he had any family members being held in detention, replied that all who had suffered injustice were his family; Abdulaziz al-Shubaily and Fawzan al-Harbi, who brought court cases on behalf of more than 100 victims of injustice and who had no one to take up their cases; their colleagues Dr Abdulkarim al-Khodr, Abdulrahman al-Hamid, Issa al-Hamid and the now released former judge Suleiman al-Rashoudi.

There is also the founder of the Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia, Waleed Abu al-Khair (see above); and the founders of the Union for Human Rights, including: Abdullah al-Atawi and Mohamed al-Oteibi; as well as the supporters of the October 26 campaign for women's right to drive and women's rights and human rights generally, including Dr Ibrahim al-Mudaimeegh, Professor Aziza Youssef, Professor Eman al-Nafjan, Loujain al-Hathloul and Mohamed al-Rabiah.

Winner of [English PEN's](#) for [Pinter Prize](#), 2018, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie [said](#):

"I am proud to share this year's PEN Pinter Prize with activist, lawyer and writer Waleed Abulkhair. [...] Waleed has dedicated his life to holding the Saudi authorities accountable for human rights abuses [...] to speaking out, to supporting the victims of those abuses."

Waleed Abulkhair represented fellow activist and writer, Raif Badawi, in court. Badawi was named English PEN's 2015 International Writer of Courage.

The [Right Livelihood Award](#) stated that the three men received the award “*for their visionary and courageous efforts, guided by universal human rights principles, to reform the totalitarian political system in Saudi Arabia*”.

In the course of the award ceremony, [Amnesty International Sweden](#) and the [Right Livelihood Award](#) called on Saudi Arabia to release the three men immediately and unconditionally.

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