



# SAUDI ARABIA'S ACPRA

HOW THE KINGDOM SILENCES ITS  
HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

**AMNESTY**  
INTERNATIONAL





Front row, left to right: Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, Waleed Abu al-Khair, Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani, Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi, Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder, following a trial session on al-Hamid and al-Qahtani. ©Private

## INTRODUCTION

This briefing focuses on the cases of 11 human rights activists in Saudi Arabia who are either imprisoned or on trial and facing imprisonment. All 11 are founders or members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), an officially unlicensed independent human rights organization that campaigned for the rights of political prisoners and detainees in Saudi Arabia until the authorities ordered its closure in March 2013.

Five of the 11 ACPRA members are detainees held without trial or awaiting re-trial – they have been held for periods of up to four years. Three are free pending the outcome of their trials. And another three are serving prison terms of up to 15 years to which they were sentenced, in separate trials. All of their trials were unfair. They were convicted on vague charges, such as “breaking

allegiance to” Saudi Arabia’s ruler and “questioning the integrity of officials,” in connection with their peaceful activism in defence of human rights in Saudi Arabia. Some of them were held in pre-trial detention for lengthy periods, denied access to lawyers and families, and tortured or otherwise ill-treated by security officials. At least one was denied legal representation at his trial.

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***“They [the authorities] weigh-up the pros and cons of detaining someone, so if you push certain limits, you go beyond a certain threshold then it might be in their interest to go after you, and now maybe the time that they go after us.”***

Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani in an interview with TIME magazine, May 2012.

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Amnesty International considers all eight detained members to be prisoners of conscience and is calling on the Saudi Arabian authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally. The organization is also calling on the authorities to drop the charges against those facing trial and ensure that the sentences and convictions of all ACPRA members are quashed.

Prior to its suppression, ACPRA acted as a thorn in the side of the Saudi Arabian government. ACPRA members spoke out repeatedly against the detention practices of the Saudi Arabian authorities and were especially critical of the Ministry of Interior and its feared security and intelligence branch, the General Directorate of Investigations (GDI) or *al-Mabahith*, whose officers wield extensive powers and are able to arrest, detain, torture and abuse those they suspect with impunity. They use these powers not only

against terrorism suspects, but against virtually anyone who speaks out against the authorities, including peaceful critics such as those associated with ACPRA. Recently implemented anti-terror laws and decrees have extended a legal cover for these abuses of power where even peaceful criticism is all too readily branded as terrorism against the state.

The Saudi Arabian authorities are currently holding hundreds of untried political detainees, and have sentenced many others to long prison terms after unfair trials before the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) or other courts. Many are alleged by the authorities to have committed violent offences, or to have supported violent and extremist armed groups such as al-Qa'ida. Others, are human rights defenders and activists who have sought to expose the abusive nature of the Saudi Arabian system of justice and to promote reforms that could bring that system into line with the requirements of international law, including human rights treaties that Saudi Arabia has ratified. By defending rights and speaking out, the ACPRA members and a small group of other courageous human rights advocates, appear to have been seen by Saudi Arabia's rulers as challenging their authority and policies, and to have been targeted in consequence. ACPRA, particularly, appears to have been perceived by the Saudi Arabian authorities to offer such a challenge because it espoused a philosophy of



ACPRA members outside court during the trial of Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani and Dr Abdullah al-Hamid. ©Private

human rights anchored in Islamic law and traditions, rather than the more common human rights discourse seen in Saudi Arabia as western-oriented, and this may be the real reason the authorities have made such efforts to suppress it.

## BACKGROUND

Human rights activism is not new to Saudi Arabia. Activists within the country have spoken out publicly against human rights violations since at least the early 1990s, despite the risks of government retaliation this entails, and in recent years formed a number of independent human rights organizations. These have sought both to monitor and document ongoing violations as well as to engage with the government to promote human rights reforms.

During the last decade, it seemed that these organizations' efforts were beginning to pay off. It appeared that the Saudi Arabian authorities had accepted the need for change and were about to build on measures they had taken in the 1990s, notably by adopting a Basic Law of Government and by ratifying certain international human rights treaties.

In 2004, the authorities licensed the National Society for Human Rights, which they described as an "independent" human rights organization although it relied on state funding for its existence, and in 2005 they founded a national human rights commission. In 2009, other states elected Saudi Arabia to a seat on the United Nation's newly formed Human Rights Council (HRC), successor to the UN Commission on Human Rights, and in the same year Saudi Arabian government representatives announced ambitious reform pledges at the country's first Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the HRC.

Five years later, as Saudi Arabia's representatives returned from attending its second UPR in 2014, the human rights picture appears far bleaker. Now, virtually all of the country's leading human rights activists are the imprisoned victims of an unrelenting official crackdown on criticism, dissent and other exercise of the right to freedom of expression. Using vague and broadly-framed terror charges, the authorities have also locked up hundreds of people they claim are a threat to the state, including many who have been held without either charge or trial for



Fowzan al-Harbi, Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid in court, 2013. ©Iman al-Qahtani



Left to right: Fowzan al-Harbi, Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid, Abdulaziz al-Shubaily, Issa al-Hamid. ©Private

years. The government has responded to peaceful protests in favour of reform and greater political rights, and on behalf of victims of rights violations, by using force to crush them, particularly in the Eastern Province where most of the country's Shi'a Muslim minority live. The crackdown appears to have been sparked, at least in part, by the Arab uprisings of 2011 that saw the ousting of longstanding authoritarian rulers in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Saudi Arabia gave sanctuary to Tunisia's deposed leader, sent forces into Bahrain to help the government confront protesters there, and moved quickly to prevent any public expression of dissent in Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Interior reaffirmed a long-standing ban on public demonstrations in early March 2011, and the authorities turned up the heat on Saudi Arabian human rights activists. Some learnt that the authorities had banned them from travelling abroad, without formally notifying them, giving a reason or allowing them any means to challenge the decision. Others received "messages" from Interior Ministry officials or their proxies instructing them to cease their activism, including for women's rights,

or face adverse consequences. Those who persisted despite the warnings were summoned for interrogations and "offered" a choice – sign a pledge to cease their activities or go to prison.

In 2012 and 2013, the authorities also sought to counter the growing role of online activism and social media, as evidenced in the Egyptian and other uprisings, either by banning outright or subjecting all encrypted social networking applications (such as Skype, WhatsApp, Viber, Line) to monitoring by Saudi Arabia's security agencies. The authorities summoned or arrested founders of websites perceived as critical, bloggers and online activists and questioned them about comments they had made or

#### Freedom of peaceful assembly in Saudi Arabia

All forms of peaceful gathering and demonstrations in Saudi Arabia are banned according to an announcement by the Ministry of Interior on 5 March 2011.

Those who break the ban are charged with "participating in or calling for demonstrations" and "disobeying the ruler" and face imprisonment accordingly.

In some cases, the authorities have punished peaceful demonstrators through harsher sentences by adding additional charges to the above, such as "inciting violence", "inciting the people against the authorities", and even "using violence" where there has been no evidence to support those charges.

***"The absence of the spirit to consult leads to despotism, and despotism brings about enslavement and persecution which kill the nation's freedom and vitality. The will of the nation therefore breaks down, and so do its administration and economy, giving way to desolation and collapse."***

From Dr Abdullah al-Hamid's talk on "Peaceful jihad, the remedy to violence and governmental and national extremism".  
Uploaded to YouTube on 4 December 2012.

their websites had carried, with chilling effect. Officials told human rights activists, victims and their families not to contact international organizations such as Amnesty International and the international media, and to shut down their social media accounts through which they reported human rights violations.

By mid-2014, the government had put in place a number of anti-terrorism legislation and executive decrees that, in effect, criminalize virtually all forms of peaceful dissent. This included a new anti-terrorism law that King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud approved in December 2013 and which came into effect on 1 February 2014. The new law defines terrorism vaguely and in terms so broad as to criminalize activities that amount to

no more than the legitimate exercise of human rights. For instance according to Article 1 any act that directly or indirectly aims at "disturbing the public order of the state", "destabilising the security of society, or the stability of the state", "endangering its national unity", "revoking the basic law of governance", "harming the reputation of the state or its standing" is considered a terrorist act.

The new law also reinforced the Ministry of Interior's already extensive powers to detain critics and opponents of the government. Alongside an existing cyber-crime law, introduced in 2007, the new anti-terrorism law appears designed to serve as a further tool through which the authorities aim to stifle even peaceful dissent.

The enactment of the new anti-terror law was followed in March 2014 by the promulgation of a series of decrees by the Ministry of Interior that define activities such as "calling for atheist thought" and "contacting any groups or individuals opposed to the Kingdom" as acts of terrorism. Similarly, those deemed by the authorities to be "seeking to disrupt national unity by calling for protests or demonstrations" and those considered to be "harming other states and their leader" are also liable under the decrees to be prosecuted and imprisoned on terrorism charges. Moreover, the decrees do not seek to address only

#### Freedom of association in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is yet to pass a Law of Associations to determine the process of establishing NGOs such as human rights organizations, despite a draft law that was finalized in 2008.

In the absence of such a law, human rights organizations cannot obtain legal recognition and their members can be, and have been, arrested and charged with "forming an unlicensed organization."

future cases; those alleged to have committed similar acts in the past that are now criminalized as terrorism under the decrees are also liable to prosecution, breaching the international legal principle prohibiting retroactive punishment. In June 2014, the Ministry of Justice issued a "confidential and urgent judicial decree" that



Gathering of ACPRA members and supporters. ©Private

reaffirmed the role of the SCC as the competent court to try cases involving alleged offences against national security.

Saudi Arabia has no law on associations that regulates the establishment and operation of independent associations, such as human rights organizations. A draft law has been pending since 2008. In practice, the authorities do not permit independent organizations, other than charities, to operate in Saudi Arabia; they require associations to obtain a license from the authorities before they can operate legally, but they do not issue licenses to organizations or associations of which they disapprove. Moreover, it is a criminal offence to establish or operate an organization without obtaining a license from the government. This creates an immense obstacle to the development of civil society in Saudi Arabia and, combined with the ban on demonstrations, makes it virtually impossible for people within the country – such as mainstream political and human rights activists, women's rights campaigners, advocates of minority rights, and foreign migrant workers facing exploitation or abuse – to publicly articulate their opinions without

exposing themselves to the risk of arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, unfair trial and long years of imprisonment. In true "Catch-22" style, the Saudi Arabian authorities have prevented independent human rights organizations such as ACPRA from obtaining licenses that would allow them to operate legally, while prosecuting the activists affiliated to them as criminals for operating an organization without a licence.

Human rights activists form only a small minority today of those suffering under the wave of state repression sweeping Saudi Arabia. Yet, they play a vital role in a country that has no independent media, allows no independent political parties, has no legislature capable of holding the executive authorities to account, no independent judiciary, and where the authorities have made it a crime to "communicate with external entities," such as Amnesty



Dr Abdullah al-Hamid sitting in court awaiting his trial. ©Private

International and other international NGOs. The members of ACPRA and other human rights activists have made a crucial contribution in exposing and documenting violations of human rights by the government and its security and intelligence agencies, in seeking to hold Saudi Arabia to its obligations under international law and treaties, and in showing the courage to stand up and speak out for justice and human rights. The Saudi Arabian authorities are making them pay a heavy price as a result.

## WHAT IS ACPRA?



ACPRA's logo from the organization's official website  
<http://www.acprahr.org/> @ACPRA

ACPRA was formed in 2009 by a group of about 15 activists who decided that the organization should operate through a system of collective leadership and regularly rotate its presidency, partly to reduce the risk that any single leader would be targeted by the authorities. It established a presence in several parts of the country, including the central al-Qassim region most affected by the government's internal "war on terror." ACPRA's income came from its members' financial contributions and it operated from the residence of one of its members until the authorities forcibly shut the organization down in March 2013. ACPRA's founding document committed it to the promotion of a distinctly Islamic concept of human rights, based on values such as justice, freedom, cultural and political diversity, and forgiveness, which were seen by its members as predating the modern system of international human rights law.

Drawing on Shari'a law and Islamic traditions, ACPRA argued for a new system of government attuned to the popular will and based on a constitution and the rule of law; a separation of powers and an independent judiciary; popular representation and government accountability; and a vibrant civil society whose members actively participate in decision-making and are aware of their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights.

The founding document called for the protection and promotion of human rights through peaceful means, including research and documentation of alleged violations, the publication of fact-finding and other reports, outreach and advocacy, and awareness-raising initiatives, such as workshops and lectures. It sought also to create safe and accessible means for victims of human rights violations to report their cases, and advocated in favour of peaceful human rights activism as the only alternative to the violence that those whose rights are suppressed frequently turn to when they have no other means of pursuing redress.

From the outset, the ACPRA activists saw the rights of detainees and prisoners as a key human rights concern due to the abrogation of their rights by the authorities, the lack of support available to them and their families in society at large, and the impunity with which state security and intelligence forces were able to carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and even unlawful killings of those they suspected of terrorism. Some ACPRA members had already been individually assisting detainees and their families, and the organization they founded quickly established itself as an important source of legal and other support for terror-related detainees and their families. ACPRA reported on human rights violations

### ACPRA's main goals include:

- Promoting human rights as set out in Islamic law and traditions, and based on values such as justice, freedom, cultural and political diversity, and forgiveness;
- The establishment of a new system of government attuned to the popular will and based on a constitution and the rule of law, a separation of powers and an independent judiciary, popular representation and government accountability, and a vibrant civil society. This includes:
  - Setting up a Supreme Constitutional Court;
  - Separating the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution from the Ministry of Interior;
  - Electing a Prime Minister;
  - Reforming the Ministry of Interior and limiting its powers;
  - Electing local governors and councils;
- A law of associations to be passed, enabling people to set up all forms of civil society associations, including human rights organizations, and protecting them from government interference;
- Enabling the formation of political parties, and recognition of the right to peaceful political opposition;
- Respect and protection of freedom of expression and enabling individuals and groups to set up newspapers and other media outlets.

in detention facilities and prisons, provided legal assistance where they could to detainees and those charged with security-related crimes, supported detainees' families, and participated in peaceful protests to call for detainees' rights.

Eight of the 11 men who put their names to ACPRA's founding document are now in prison



Three of ACPRA's members, including Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Fowzan al-Harbi. ©Private

themselves because of their peaceful campaigning for the rights of people detained or imprisoned as terrorism suspects. Three of those eight are serving prison terms of up to 15

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***“Many human rights defenders firmly believe that the greatest injustices ever are the policies of the Minister of Interior in suppressing public freedoms and dignity.*”**

From the statement signed by Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid on 12 April 2014, five days prior to his arrest.

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years. Two are detained without any charge or trial. Three had their initial sentences overturned and are awaiting their retrial while still in detention. Of the 11, three remain free pending the outcome of their trials. It is feared that these three - in addition to the three who are currently undergoing trial while in detention - will be tried at the SCC under the provisions of the new anti-terrorism law.

## WHY HAS ACPRA BEEN TARGETED?

ACPRA is not the only unlicensed Saudi Arabian human rights organization that the authorities have targeted, but it was targeted first and singled out for the most severe treatment. One reason for this may be the profile of some of ACPRA's founding members, who included long-standing activists and public figures experienced in Shari'a law and Islamic jurisprudence, whom the authorities could not readily dismiss as activists promoting an “alien”, “western” and “atheist” culture of human rights. ACPRA presented a more profound challenge to the legitimacy of the authorities' interpretations of human rights in Islam and to their assertions of cultural particularity because it sought to root its human rights discourse in Shari'a law and jurisprudence. Its founders included a former judge and practicing lawyers, professors of Islamic jurisprudence and Arabic literature, and public figures with strong Islamic credentials. By daring to challenge the authorities' interpretations of human rights in Islam, they put themselves at risk.

ACPRA was also particularly critical of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Interior, calling it “a state within a state” because of the excessive powers it wields. The Ministry has its own investigative body, the General Directorate of Investigations, or *al-Mabahith*, that effectively supersedes the authority of the public prosecutor's office, and appears to wield enormous influence over the SCC which has jurisdiction over terrorism-related cases and whose proceedings are conducted in secret. The Ministry also operates its own detention facilities. In practice, the Interior Ministry operates as if it is above the law and unaccountable, and its security and intelligence officials commit human rights violations with impunity – while those who seek to expose or take issue with the Ministry's abuses, as the ACPRA cases demonstrate, face severe repression.

## THE SILENCING OF ACPRA

The government's crackdown on ACPRA began in early 2011 when security officials arrested Mohammed al-Bajadi, one of the organization's founders, after he attended a peaceful protest by families of long-held political



Mohammed al-Bajadi with his two children during his temporary release in August 2013. ©Private

detainees outside the Interior Ministry in Riyadh. In April 2012, the SCC sentenced him to four years in prison after an unfair trial in

which he was denied legal representation. He was found guilty of participating in the establishment of an unlicensed organization, harming the image of the state through the media, calling on the families of political detainees to protest and hold sit-ins, contesting the independence of the judiciary, and having banned books in his possession.

In March 2012, the authorities began interrogating Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani regarding their work with ACPRA and their peaceful activism. Their trial began in June 2012.



Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi and his daughter.  
©Private

The authorities next arrested Saleh al-Ashwan, early on 7 July 2012 in a Riyadh street as he left a mosque after attending dawn prayers. He then disappeared and remained missing for two months, until his family and lawyer learnt that he was being held at al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh. More than two years after his arrest, he continues to be detained without charge or trial, and without any means of challenging his detention.

On December 2012, the authorities arrested Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi, a former judge and well-known advocate of political reform, who had previously been sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment on charges that included "breaking

**Other Saudi Arabian human rights organizations forcibly shut down**

- Adala Center for Human Rights (2011-2013): one founding member sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2014.
- The Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia (2008 - 2014): founder sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2014.
- Union for Human Rights (2013): founding members currently under investigation.

allegiance to the ruler and disobeying him" and "participating in forming an organization called 'Tawasso' in order to spread chaos under the cover of advice and reform". He had been at liberty for 18 months awaiting the outcome of an appeal before his re-arrest, which came two days after a video recording of a private talk he had given, in which he argued that tenets of Islamic law guarantee the right to peaceful protest, was posted online.

The main government onslaught against ACPRA came in March 2013 when the Criminal Court imposed long prison terms on two of ACPRA's

most eminent founding members, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani, and ordered the disbanding of ACPRA, the confiscation of its property, and the removal of its social media accounts partly on the grounds that it was an unlicensed organization and therefore operating illegally. Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani were sentenced to 11 and 10 years in prison respectively on charges of "breaking allegiance to the ruler", "questioning the integrity of officials", "seeking to disrupt security and inciting disorder by calling for demonstrations", and "instigating international organizations against the Kingdom".

On 24 April 2013, the authorities arrested Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder as he was about to appear for the fourth session of his trial before the Criminal Court on charges that included "inciting disorder by calling for demonstrations", "insulting the judicial authority", and "participating in the founding of an unlicensed organization".

His arrest occurred when he refused to enter the court in protest against the judge's decision to bar a group of about 10 women from entering the



Left to right: Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, Waleed Abu al-Khair, Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani, following a session in the trial of al-Hamid and al-Qahtani. ©Private

courtroom to observe his trial. In June 2013 the court convicted Dr al-Khoder and sentenced him to eight years in prison.

In May 2014, his retrial started after the Court of Appeal sent the case back to the Criminal Court, only for the judge to rule that the case exceeded his jurisdiction and should be transferred to the SCC for trial due to the nature of the charges.

The Criminal Court judge also ordered the release of Dr al-Khoder pending trial, but the authorities did not comply and he remained in detention.



Fowzan al-Harbi and his two children. ©Private

prison and a flogging of 300 lashes.

Fowzan al-Harbi, another of ACPRA's founding members, was summoned for interrogation by the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution (BIP) on 11 May 2013. He was charged with "destabilising security and spreading chaos", "inciting public opinion against the authorities" by among other things, "signing statements calling to break allegiance to the ruler," and "participating in setting up an unlicensed organization".

He went on trial before the Criminal Court in Riyadh in early December 2013, and was detained at the end of the second trial session on 26 December. The authorities gave no reason for his arrest and he remained in detention at al-Malaz

#### Persecution of other Saudi Arabian human rights activists

Waleed Abu al-Khair: sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2014;

Fadhel al-Manasif: sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2014;

Mikhlif al-Shammari: sentenced to 5 years in prison in 2013;

Fawzia al-Oyouni: sentenced to 10 months in prison in 2013;

Wajeha al-Huwaider: sentenced to 10 months in prison in 2013;

Prison in Riyadh until days before his trial ended in June 2014. The court convicted him and imposed a seven-year prison sentence to be followed by a seven-year ban on travel outside Saudi Arabia. The court also banned him from participating in social media and from socialising with people until he repents.

The BIP summoned two other ACPRA founders, Abdulaziz al-Shubaily and Issa al-Hamid (two of the three founding members of ACPRA to remain at liberty), for interrogation in



Abdulaziz al-Shubaily and Issa al-Hamid. ©Private

November 2013. Issa al-Hamid was charged with offences such as "inciting against public order" and "spreading chaos by participating in the drafting and publishing of a statement calling for demonstrations", "disrespecting the judicial authorities", as well as "communicating wrong information to third parties in order to harm the image of the state" and "participating in setting up an unlicensed organization". His trial began in June 2014 before the Criminal Court at Buraydah but the judge directed that his case be transferred to the SCC. Abdulaziz al-Shubaily was put on trial on a similar list of charges before the same court in September 2014.

Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid, was

***"[ACPRA] are among the few people in the Kingdom who walked their talk in relation to human rights and reform. Their courage is astonishing in such a society and they have paid the highest price for their peaceful struggle."***

Abdulaziz al-Hussan, lawyer for some ACPRA members, 2014.

Four days after the arrest of Abdulkareem al-Khoder, *al-Mabahith* summoned Omar al-Sa'id, ACPRA's youngest member, for questioning and detained him when he insisted that his lawyer, who had accompanied him, should attend his interrogation.

He faced similar charges to those brought against the other ACPRA members and went on trial on 10 June 2013 before the Criminal Court in Buraydah, in the north-central al-Qassim region. On 12 December 2013, the court sentenced him to four years in

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called for questioning by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Buraydah in April 2014. When he arrived, police told him they had a warrant for his arrest. He was detained incommunicado for 30 days, during which he went on hunger strike in protest.



Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid. ©Private

The authorities moved him in May to Buraydah Prison in al-Qassim and permitted him to contact his family. In September, he was still detained without charge.

### VIOLATIONS

#### TRAVEL BANS AND OTHER HARASSMENT

Like many other Saudi Arabian activists, before their arrests the ACPRA members faced many obstacles in their efforts to defend human rights and hold the authorities accountable for abuses. The Ministry of Interior banned all 11 of them from travelling outside Saudi Arabia. They were given no prior notice of the travel bans, no reason for their imposition, and no means to appeal or overturn the bans. At least one of the ACPRA members learnt of his ban only when he arrived at the airport expecting to take a flight to a neighbouring state, only to be told by border security officials that he was subject to an indefinite ban on travel abroad and turned back. Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi has not been permitted to travel outside Saudi Arabia since 1993. Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder learnt that he was subject to a ban on foreign travel only when he was

due to cross the border into a neighbouring state in 2010. Such bans, which the government has also applied to other Saudi Arabian human rights activists, arbitrarily restrict the right to freedom of movement, which includes the right of every person to leave (and return to) their own country. The unjust and arbitrary nature of the bans is underlined by the fact that those who are subject to them have no means of remedy. They cannot challenge them in the courts or before any other independent body. In essence, the bans are a form of administrative punishment imposed by the authorities as a sanction for their activism.

The ACPRA activists were also subject to other forms of official harassment, including messages sent to them by the authorities either directly or through intermediaries warning them that they were under scrutiny and that they should cease



Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani and his four children after his graduation in May 2002. ©Private

their activities or expect to face severe consequences, such as arrest, interrogation and imprisonment. Some received messages telling them to stop their use of the internet and social media, and to close their online accounts, or face a summons from the CID for interrogation by the BIP about comments they had tweeted or posted online, and their contacts with foreign media and international organizations such as Amnesty International.

#### Charges that have been brought against ACPRA's members:

- "Breaking allegiance to and disobeying the ruler,"
- "Questioning the integrity of officials,"
- "Seeking to disrupt security and inciting disorder by calling for demonstrations,"
- "Inciting public opinion against the authorities"
- "Forming, or participating in forming, an unlicensed organization."

When summoned to such interrogations, activists were usually told that they must sign statements vowing not to repeat their "crimes" or else face charges, trial and imprisonment. The system is one that operates directly counter to the principle of presumption of innocence. Most of the 11 ACPRA members were called for such interrogations before their eventual imprisonment. Some were arrested while attending such interrogations; others were charged with offences and remained at liberty until their trials had begun, but were then arrested without the authorities disclosing any reason. Two members of ACPRA were arrested without being first summoned for interrogation; in September 2014, both men remained in detention without any charge or trial.



Fowzan al-Harbi and Abdulaziz al-Shubaili on the beach. ©Private

## INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION, TORTURE AND OTHER OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Most of the ACPRA members were detained incommunicado for periods ranging from a few days to several months before they were brought to trial. Mohammed al-Bajadi was held incommunicado for three weeks after uniformed security officials accompanied by others in plain clothes seized him, without producing a warrant, as he made his way to work on 21 March 2013.

His family had no news of him for over two weeks, until he was allowed to phone his wife on 5 April 2013. They were permitted to visit him for the first time only after he had been

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***"A security officer asked me, 'do you have any imprisoned relatives?' I said, yes all prisoners are my family. He replied - and I quote him- 'Do you want to join them in prison?' I replied, No... we want them released."***

Tweet from Mohammed al-Bajadi during the protest which he attended on 20 March 2011. He was arrested the following day.

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in detention for seven months. He had no access to a lawyer and is reported to have been subjected to verbal abuse and other ill-treatment during his detention.

Saleh al-Ashwan's arrest on 7 July 2012 was carried out by a large group of security officials who surrounded him as he made his way home after attending early morning prayers at a mosque. They produced no warrant for his arrest but took him to his home and searched it, taking away all computers and phones they found there. At first, the authorities



Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Saleh al-Ashwan. ©Private

refused to disclose his whereabouts until his lawyer and his brother found out where he was being held. They were told that he was being questioned for participating in a protest. He remained in incommunicado detention for two months, repeatedly interrogated without the assistance of a lawyer, and allegedly tortured and degraded by being stripped, beaten, and suspended by his limbs from the ceiling of an interrogation room.

Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi, arrested without a warrant on 12 December 2012, was detained incommunicado and in solitary confinement for two months, despite his advanced years – he was 76 at the time – before the authorities allowed him any contact with his family.

Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid was arrested on 17 April 2014 when he responded to a summons to report to the CID in Buraydah. He was told there was a warrant for his arrest but he never saw it. For 30 days he was detained incommunicado and interrogated at length about his role and activities with ACPRA, and about statements he had signed. He was moved to another place of detention and allowed to contact his

family only after going on hunger strike

## UNFAIR TRIALS

The Saudi Arabian authorities prosecuted the ACPRA members on vague charges that are not clearly defined in law and which equate peaceful political activities to terrorism. Of the list of charges made available to Amnesty International the most common were "breaking allegiance to and disobeying the ruler" of Saudi Arabia, "questioning the integrity of officials," and "seeking to disrupt security and inciting disorder by



Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder and Abdulaziz al-Shubaily following a session in the trial of al-Khoder, 2013. ©Private

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calling for demonstrations” as well as “disseminating false information to foreign groups” and “forming or participating in forming an unlicensed organization.” Some of the charges themselves are contrary



Omar al-Sa'id and his daughter. ©Private

to human rights standards because they criminalize the peaceful exercise of human rights. In other cases, overly broad and vague charges were used to prosecute ACPRA members for exercising their rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of associations.

To support these charges the General Prosecution usually submitted a list of actions by the defendants to the

trial court, which the court then accepted as proof of their guilt. For example, the General Prosecution's assertion that Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder and Issa al-Hamid had written and disseminated a statement entitled “Freedom of demonstration is the safety valve against the government and civil violence: 20 proposals to double the success of demonstrations”, was enough to convince the trial court that it had been their intention to “spread chaos,” even if no such chaos occurred.

According to the General Prosecution, letters that some ACPRA members had openly addressed to Saudi Arabia's king and statements they had made calling for prosecution of the Interior Minister for torture and other human rights violations were ample evidence that they had “broken allegiance to the ruler,” and shown disrespect for the Saudi Arabian authorities, and thereby committed serious crimes.

The ACPRA members were also charged with, and convicted of, forming or participating in an illegal organization, despite informing the authorities of the organization's



ACPRA members outside the Criminal Court in Buraydah, during a hearing in the trial of Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder, 2013. ©Private

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***“The call for peaceful demonstrations to lift injustice and tyranny, and to remove corruption and restore stolen freedom and humiliated dignity is a call for the good and to promote virtue and prevent vice. These are divinely ordained duties for all believers. For as long as the purpose is legitimate, any permissible means of achieving it is not only legitimate but also obligatory. Peaceful demonstrations therefore are an expression and a means to these legitimate ends.”***

From Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi's talk on the legality of peaceful demonstration in Islamic Shari'a that led to his arrest. The talk was uploaded to YouTube on 11 December 2012 and he was arrested the following day.

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formation, which is generally considered an acceptable means of forming a charitable organization in the absence of a law for associations. Additionally, ACPRA and its members were accused of spreading discord and making public accusations against the authorities. One “proof” of this that the General Prosecution listed was an ACPRA statement criticizing the authorities' forcible suppression of a protest by prisoners' families.

Saudi Arabian prosecutors also laid charges against the ACPRA members under article 6 of the 2007 Cyber-crime Law, citing tweets and messages that they had posted online as evidence that they had breached the law's prohibition on producing, preparing, transmitting or storing materials deemed to impinge upon public order. For example, prosecutors accused Omar al-Sa'id of possessing a Twitter account and using it to tweet statements that the authorities deemed disrespectful to them. As well, prosecutors accused him of using social media to call for



Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani with their lawyer, Abdulaziz al-Hussan, in court. ©Private

demonstrations and marches, and of filming such events and posting the footage online. In other cases, prosecutors accused Dr Abdullah al-Hamid of posting an article on his Facebook page entitled "Terrorism of the Ministry of Interior" concerning alleged human rights violations by Interior Ministry officials, and Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder of denigrating the Saudi Arabian authorities when he appeared in a TV programme and accused them of suppressing rights and freedoms. Fowzan al-Harbi was also accused of posting ACPRA's statements on the organization's website and retweeting those posts from his account.

Prosecutors accused Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani and Issa al-Hamid of communicating with international bodies in order to harm the Kingdom's image abroad, but provided no evidence to substantiate the charge or to show how and to what extent Saudi Arabia's standing had been damaged, if at all. The seven ACPRA members sentenced were all convicted on charges that either do not amount to recognizable crimes or were used to criminalize the peaceful exercise of human rights, and after trials that breached fundamental principles of due

process. For example, Mohammed al-Bajadi, the first to stand trial, was denied access to a lawyer during his lengthy pre-trial detention and also during the trial itself. He learnt that he had been sentenced to four years in prison, followed by a five-year ban on travel outside Saudi Arabia, only when the authorities informed him. The authorities did not publicly disclose the charges against him or his sentence. Nor was he or his lawyer present when the Court of Appeal reviewed, and overturned his conviction and sentence. His subsequent retrial commenced with neither he nor his defence team present at the hearings.

The trials of some ACPRA members were conducted in courtrooms packed with *al-Mabahith* officers in plain clothes, placing the judges as well as the defendants and their lawyers and supporters, if any were allowed to be present, under scrutiny and pressure. While *al-Mabahith* agents were able to gain access to the trials, members of the public were sometimes banned from entering the courtroom for unknown reasons. The judge presiding at the trial of Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder barred a group of women, including family members, who wished to observe the proceedings at the fourth

session without reason. The women were denied entry to the courtroom and the judge ordered the detention of Dr al-Khoder, who had been at liberty until then, when he objected to the barring of the women from the court. He remains in detention despite a judicial order to release him. Fowzan al-Harbi was also still at liberty when his trial commenced, but then detained by order of the judge, who gave no reason, at the end of the trial's second session. He then spent six months in detention before being released two days before his sentencing. He is currently free awaiting the outcome of his appeal. The sentence he is appealing bans him from both participating in social media and socialising with others until he "repents", opening him to the risk of re-arrest and imprisonment if he is deemed to have violated these bans that appear intended to subject him to social isolation as a form of punishment.



Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi, Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani and Dr Abdullah al-Hamid during one of ACPRA's talks. ©Private

## HARASSMENT AND ILL-TREATMENT IN PRISON

The targeted harassment of ACPRA's members has continued in prison. All of them have complained about their prison conditions and discriminatory treatment. Their books and personal belongings have been arbitrarily confiscated. They have shared the miserable experience of being in a Saudi

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Arabian prison where wards that are equipped to accommodate 80 prisoners commonly contain 300 or more inmates sleeping on the floor, often without mattresses or blankets and frequently having to queue for long periods to use the toilet. They receive poor food and rarely see the sun. The ACPRA prisoners serving prison sentences are held together with other convicted prisoners, including some convicted of violent crimes. The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners require that "the different categories of prisoners shall be kept in separate institutions or parts of institutions taking account of their sex, age, criminal record, the legal reason for their detention and the necessities of their treatment".

At least four of the ACPRA prisoners have undertaken hunger strikes to protest against their treatment and conditions in detention and prison. Mohammed al-Bajadi has launched hunger strike protests several times, during which Saudi Arabian prison authorities are reported to have fed him intravenously despite his objection, causing him stomach pain. He is said to have lost weight during his incarceration and to have been denied medical treatment that he had requested from the authorities. In July 2012, he and

several other prisoners were reportedly taken from their prison cells by masked guards and left for two days, blindfolded, in a room without any bedding, and then found



Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani and two of his sons during his trial. ©Private

that their personal belongings had disappeared when they were returned to their cells. When he complained about the incident he was sent to solitary confinement for a month and was only returned to his cell after he went on hunger strike to protest that arbitrary decision.

Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani, both of whom have been held in prison wards used for violent criminal offenders, went on hunger strike in March 2014, to which the authorities responded by placing the latter in solitary confinement. Since

then, 66 year-old Dr Abdullah al-Hamid has been moved between different wards, in some of which hygiene standards are poor and prisoners are allowed to smoke, despite the danger this poses to their own and other inmates' health. He requires dental treatment, having lost his front teeth in August 2014, but two months later he is yet to receive it. He is held in a prison section whose other inmates are mostly foreign migrants, many of whom do not speak Arabic.

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***"The world is dying around us in search of freedom and dignity. Is it too much to spend few nights in detention for them?"***

***Mohammed al-Bajadi was released and that is true. But there is a bigger truth: many are still detained like Mohammed al-Bajadi and waiting for your serious and steadfast stand."***

From Mohammed al-Bajadi's tweets during his temporary release in August 2013.

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Two weeks after his arrest, Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid started a hunger strike in protest of his unjustified arrest and incommunicado detention. He was then moved to Buraydah prison in al-Qassim and allowed to contact his family. He has diabetes and had a surgical operation on his foot months before his detention. He needs daily insulin injections and regular hospital check-ups to have his wounds cleaned and diabetes adequately monitored. According to his legal representative, the prison authorities have several times failed to take him to hospital and to provide him with his insulin injections on time. He suffers from headaches and eyesight problems.

### **Flogging as corporal punishment in Saudi Arabia**

Flogging is used extensively as corporal punishment in Saudi Arabia despite it being a state party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). In 2002, the UN Committee against Torture expressly stated that the use of flogging by Saudi Arabia violates the Convention.

Flogging in Saudi Arabia is mandatory for a number of offences and can also be used at the discretion of the judge. Sentences can range from dozens to tens of thousands of lashes, and are usually carried out in instalments, at intervals ranging from two weeks to one month.

The highest number of lashes imposed in a single case recorded by Amnesty International was 40,000 lashes in the case of a defendant convicted on murder charges in 2009.

A member of ACPRA, Omar al-Sa'id, has been sentenced to flogging.

Despite his advanced years – he is 78 - Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi, is imprisoned in a cell measuring approximately five by six metres that he shares with four other prisoners. He is rarely able to see the sun, contrary to the advice of his doctor, according to his family. They say he has also complained about the poor quality of the food that he and other prisoners receive.

Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder and Omar al-Sa'id are both held in different sections of Buraydah prison in al-Qassim designated for people held for drugs offences, but they are not permitted contact with one another.

According to Fowzan al-Harbi's legal representative, he has been required to sleep in a hallway leading to the mosque at al-Malaz prison in Riyadh because the prison is over-crowded with other inmates.

Meetings with their families and legal representatives in prison have also been an issue for ACPRA's members. For instance, under the conditions in which Fowzan al-Harbi was detained, it was impossible for him to meet his legal representative to prepare his defence. However, when he raised this issue with the judge, the latter dismissed his complaint saying that it was not his responsibility.

#### Timeline of ACPRA's silencing

- 12 October 2009: ACPRA founded
- 20 March 2011: Mohammed al-Bajadi arrested
- March 2012: Dr Abdullah al-Hamid summoned for interrogations
- March 2012: Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani summoned for interrogations
- March 2012: Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder summoned for interrogations
- April 2012: Mohammed al-Bajadi sentenced in a secret trial
- 11 June 2012: Dr Abdullah al-Hamid put on trial
- 16 June 2012: Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani put on trial
- 7 July 2012: Saleh al-Ashwan arrested
- 12 December 2012: Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi arrested
- January 2013: Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder put on trial
- 9 March 2013: Dr Abdullah al-Hamid sentenced and detained
- 9 March 2013: Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani sentenced and detained
- 9 March 2013: ACPRA ordered to shut down
- 24 April 2013: Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder arrested
- 28 April 2013: Omar al-Sa'id arrested
- 11 May 2013: Fowzan al-Harbi summoned for interrogation
- 10 June 2013: Omar al-Sa'id put on trial
- 24 June 2013: Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder sentenced
- 28 November 2013: Issa al-Hamid summoned for interrogation
- 28 November 2013: Abdulaziz al-Shubaily summoned for interrogation
- 4 December 2013: Fowzan al-Harbi put on trial
- 12 December 2013: Omar al-Sa'id sentenced
- 26 December 2013: Fowzan al-Harbi arrested
- 14 April 2014: Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid arrested
- 12 June 2014: Issa al-Hamid put on trial
- 25 June 2014: Fowzan al-Harbi sentenced
- 24 September 2014: Abdulaziz al-Shubaily put on trial



Left to right: Abdulaziz al-Shubaily, Fowzan al-Harbi, Issa al-Hamid, Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid. © Private

## WHO ARE THEY?

### MOHAMMED AL-BAJADI



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Mohammed al-Bajadi is a 36-year-old businessman, a father of two, and a human rights activist and founding member of ACPRA. He also founded the "Forum for Cultural Debate", a group that formerly met weekly to discuss the promotion of human rights in Saudi Arabia.

He was previously arrested on 4 September 2007, apparently in connection with his human rights activities, but later released. He was rearrested on 21 March 2011, a day after he went to a protest outside the Interior Ministry in Riyadh. The protest was attended by scores of men and women who were calling for the release of their male relatives detained for years without charge or trial. Mohammed al-Bajadi had tweeted messages about the protest beforehand. He was initially sentenced to four years in prison, but his sentence was overturned and he is currently facing a retrial before the SCC.

He is a prisoner of conscience currently detained at al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh where he says he has been ill-treated.

### SHEIKH SULIAMAN AL-RASHUDI



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Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi is a 78-year-old former judge and a lawyer. He is a founding member of ACPRA and served as its president in 2012. He is a respected public figure known for his activism and for calling for reforms and greater respect for human rights in Saudi Arabia.

He was first detained in 1993 for two months, when he was banned from traveling for five years. His law firm was forced to close down for 10 years after he participated along with six other prominent activists in founding the "Lajnat al-Difa'a 'An al-Huquq al-Shar'iya" (Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights - CDLR). In 1995, he was arrested after taking part in a march calling for the release of Sheikh Salman al-'Uda. He was subsequently released after spending almost four years in detention without charge or trial. On 21 February 2004, he was again arrested in Ulaysha in Riyadh after he signed a statement calling for reforms and for a constitutional monarchy. He was detained for two weeks and was released only after signing a pledge to refrain from activities such as delivering sermons in mosques, speaking in public forums and to the media. Once released, he was monitored by the authorities and received threats to stop his activism.

On 3 February 2007, he was one of 16 men detained in the cities of Jeddah and Medina, for circulating a petition calling for political reform and for discussing a proposal to establish an independent human rights organization in Saudi Arabia. All 16 were held without charge until August 2010 when they were formally charged.

Sheikh Suliaman al-Rashudi was released on bail on 23 June 2011. On 22 November 2011, he received a 15-year-prison sentence to be followed by a 15-year travel ban, but he remained at liberty pending the outcome of an appeal.

He was rearrested on 12 December 2012 and is currently serving the remainder of his 15-year-prison sentence, which was upheld on appeal. In total he has spent 10 years in prison and has been banned from traveling abroad for over 20 years.

He is a prisoner of conscience, currently held at al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh, where he is reported to have been ill-treated.

### DR ABDULLAH AL-HAMID



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Dr Abdullah al-Hamid is a 66-year-old human rights defender, a writer and a founding member of ACPRA. He has written numerous publications on human rights and the independence of judiciary. He was a professor of contemporary literature at al-Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh before being dismissed for his activism. He is married and has eight children.

He was first arrested in 1993 by *al-Mabahith* and reportedly suffered from torture and other ill-treatment before being released, but only after signing a pledge to stop his political activism. He was rearrested a year later and almost a month after his incommunicado detention he was admitted to a hospital in Riyadh for treatment for diabetes. He was rearrested in 2004 and 2005 and sentenced to a long prison term before being released through a royal pardon, but was again arrested in 2007 and sentenced to four years in prison. His last arrest was in March 2013 when he was sentenced to 11 years in prison.

He is a prisoner of conscience currently serving an 11-year sentence at al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh where he has reported that he has been ill-treated.

### DR MOHAMMAD AL-QAHTANI



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Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani is a 46-year-old father of five, a prominent human rights defender, one of ACPRA's co-founders, and the organization's most internationally recognized figure. He holds a PhD in economics from Indiana University at Bloomington and was a professor of economics in Saudi Arabia. He hosted a weekly TV show discussing economic issues but his programme was stopped because of his views and opinions about economic conditions in Saudi Arabia.

He has a long history of involvement in the submission of cases of detainees held without charge or trial to the Board of Grievance, and for assisting their families in claiming their rights. Before his detention, he was also vocal in publicly raising concerns about the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia, including through media interviews. He is a strong supporter of women's rights, including the "Women to Drive" campaign of June 2011, and is a proponent of peaceful dialogue and discourse in demanding rights.

He is a prisoner of conscience currently serving a 10-year sentence at al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh where he has alleged ill-treatment.

### ISSA AL-HAMID



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Issa al-Hamid is a 47-year-old and another of ACPRA's founding members.

He was arrested together with his brother, Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, and held for several days in July 2007 in connection with a protest against the prolonged detention of detainees held without charge or trial. Subsequently, the Criminal Court in Buraydah sentenced him to six months in prison after convicting him of inciting protests, and ordered that he stopped inciting women to protest.

He was interrogated over several months and put on trial before the General Court in Buraydah on 12 June 2014. At the third session, the judge ruled that the case fell outside his jurisdiction and transferred it to the SCC. Issa al-Hamid is currently at liberty awaiting his trial before the SCC.

If convicted and imprisoned, he will become another prisoner of conscience.

### SALEH AL-ASHWAN



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Saleh al-Saleh al-Ashwan is a 30-year-old graduate in Islamic Shari'a from the al-Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, and a member of ACPRA.

He is a prisoner of conscience detained without charge or trial since his arrest in April 2012, and is now held at al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh.

He is reported to have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in detention.

### ABDULAZIZ AL-SHUBAILY



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Abdulaziz al-Shubaily, is a 30-year-old founding member of ACPRA who formerly helped many families of long term untried detainees to take their cases to the Board of Grievance. Since November 2013 he has been repeatedly interrogated about his human rights work, statements he had signed and his work with ACPRA. He is one of the legal representative of nine of the 11 ACPRA members who faced trial. His trial before the SCC started on 24 September 2014.

If convicted and imprisoned, he will become another prisoner of conscience.

### OMAR AL-SA'ID



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At 22, Omar al-Sa'id is the youngest of ACPRA's members to be detained and sentenced. He is married and has a two-year-old daughter. He took his university finals exam and graduated while in detention.

He was initially sentenced to four years in prison and 300 lashes on 12 December 2013, but his sentence was overturned on appeal and he will be retried before the SCC.

He is a prisoner of conscience currently detained at Buraydah prison in al-Qassim, where he is reported to have been ill-treated.

### DR ABDULKAREEM AL-KHODER



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Dr Abdulkareem Yousef al-Khoder is a 48-year-old human rights defender and a founding member of ACPRA. He is a former professor of comparative jurisprudence in the Faculty of Islamic Jurisprudence at al-Qassim University, but he was dismissed from his job in October 2011, reportedly because of his activism.

He has been banned from travelling outside Saudi Arabia since 2010. In 2013, he was sentenced to eight years in prison; however, an appeal court overturned his sentence and he now faces retrial before the SCC. Despite the judge's order to release him pending the outcome of his retrial, Dr Abdulkareem al-Khoder remains detained in prison.

He is a prisoner of conscience currently detained at Buraydah prison in al-Qassim, where he is reported to have been ill-treated.

### FOWZAN AL-HARBI



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Fowzan al-Harbi, is a 36-year-old engineer employed at the King Abdulaziz City of Science and Technology, a married father of two children, human rights defender and founding member of ACPRA, is currently at liberty awaiting the outcome of his appeal against a seven-year prison sentence.

He was arrested in December 2013 and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment but released on 24 June 2014 after spending six months in prison and is now free pending the outcome of his appeal. His employer stopped paying Fowzan al-Harbi's salary shortly after his arrest in 2013 and he has not been permitted to return to his employment since his release in June 2014.

If he is again detained, he will again become a prisoner of conscience.

### DR ABDULRAHMAN AL-HAMID



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Dr Abdulrahman al-Hamid is a 52-year-old founding member of ACPRA and the brother of Dr Abdullah and Issa al-Hamid. He holds a PhD in Islamic economics from Umu al-Qura University in Mecca. He served as ACPRA's first president.

On 12 April 2014 he signed a statement along with other activists calling for the Minister of Interior to be put on trial "for his policy of suppressing public freedoms," following which he was arrested.

He is a prisoner of conscience currently detained without charge or trial at Buraydah prison in al-Qassim, where he is reported to have been ill-treated.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Amnesty International is calling on the Saudi Arabian authorities to take the following actions without delay:**

- Immediately and unconditionally release the ACPRA prisoners and detainees and all other prisoners of conscience – those detained or imprisoned solely on account of their peaceful exercise of freedom of expression and other human rights, including rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly;
- Ensure that the sentences and convictions are quashed and drop any outstanding charges against the ACPRA members whose cases are described here and against all other prisoners of conscience;
- Ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and are detained in facilities whose conditions satisfy the standards laid down in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners;
- Lift the foreign travel bans in force against the ACPRA activists and other human rights activists and defenders, respect their freedom of movement and end the use of other arbitrary measures to penalize and harass them;
- Repeal the anti-terror law and related legislation or extensively revise it in order to bring it into full conformity with international law and international human rights standards, including by adopting a definition of terrorism that does not infringe on the peaceful exercise of human rights.



ACPRA members outside court follow a hearing in the trial of Dr Abdullah al-Hamid and Dr Mohammad al-Qahtani. ©Private

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Amnesty International  
International Secretariat  
Peter Benenson House  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW  
United Kingdom

[amnesty.org](http://amnesty.org)