

14 September 2017

Saudi Arabia – Human rights defenders Essam Koshak and Issa Al-Nukhaifi facing trial

On 4 October 2017, human rights defenders **Essam Koshak** and **Issa Al-Nukhaifi** will be brought to trial for charges related to their human rights activism.

[Essam Koshak](#) is a human rights defender working on civil and political rights, is active on Twitter and has been particularly vocal on issues of corruption and freedom of expression in Saudi Arabia. He has also supported the campaign to end the guardianship of women in Saudi Arabia. [Issa Al-Nukhaifi](#) is a human rights defender and lawyer who advocates against the government's policy of forced displacement of persons from the borders between Saudi Arabia and Yemen without adequate compensation. He has also voiced his criticism and protested against Saudi Arabia's war on Yemen.

On 4 October 2017, Essam Koshak and Issa Al-Nukhaifi will be brought to trial at Saudi Arabia's Specialized Criminal Court for charges related to their human rights activism. Both human rights defenders are currently being held in Riyadh's Al-Ha'ir Criminal Prison. On 21 August 2017 charges were brought against the human rights defenders. Essam Koshak was accused of "*inciting public opinion*" and of illegally supporting an end to the women's guardianship system. Human rights defender Issa Al-Nukhaifi was charged with "*inciting public opinion against the rulers*", and "*insulting the authorities*". He is also accused of calling for the release of individuals affiliated with banned organizations, such as the Civil and Political Rights Association in Saudi Arabia (ACPRA), and of being in contact with alleged members of the opposition.

Essam Koshak was first [summoned](#) by the Criminal Investigation Department in Mecca on 8 January 2017 and detained in Al-Mansour police station until he was released that evening. The human rights defender was ordered to appear before the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution in Mecca on the following day, 9 January 2017. He complied but was then detained by the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution and has been held in custody since. Issa Al-Nukhaifi was arrested on 18 December 2016 by Saudi Arabian security forces in Jizan, and has been detained since then.

Front Line Defenders condemns the continued detention and judicial harassment of Essam Koshak and Issa Al-Nukhaifi as it believes these actions are solely related to their legitimate and peaceful human rights activities.

Front Line Defenders calls upon the authorities of Saudi Arabia to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release and drop all charges against human rights defenders Essam Koshak and Issa Al-Nukhaifi as it is believed that they are solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Cease targeting of human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment