

6 January 2017

Saudi Arabia / Sudan – Sudanese human rights defenders detained in unknown location by Saudi authorities and at risk of deportation to Sudan

As of 6 January 2017, the Saudi authorities have held Sudanese human rights defenders Mr **Al-Waleed Imam Hasan Taha** and Mr **Al-Qasem Mohammad Sayyed Ahmad** for 16 days in an unknown location without charge or access to legal counsel. Both defenders are currently at risk of being deported to Sudan where they could face torture and/or ill-treatment.

[Al-Waleed Imam Hasan Taha](#) and [Al-Qasem Mohammad Sayyed Ahmad](#) are Sudanese accountants working in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Prior to arriving in Saudi Arabia, both human rights defenders were founding members of a group called Abna' Al-Sahafa or Citizen of Al-Sahafa in Khartoum. The group is currently providing assistance and basic services to Sudanese people in need. Following their departure from Sudan, the human rights defenders remained actively working with this group. From Saudi Arabia, they provided logistic and financial support for those in need of medicine and medical treatment following a crippling rise in medicine prices in Sudan. The human rights defenders have also called for the rights of Sudanese people through social media in response to the atrocities committed by the Sudanese authorities in the latest phase of civil disobedience. Al-Qasem Ahmad runs a Facebook page called Ma'asi Hukm Al-Askar wa Al-Kayzan in Sudan translated meaning, "the Tragedies of Military and Kayzan Rule in Sudan".

On 21 December, several members of the Saudi intelligence arrested Al-Waleed Taha and Al-Qasem Ahmad from their office in Riyadh. The defenders were then taken to their respective homes where a search by Saudi intelligence ensued. According to Al-Waleed Taha's wife, Ms Nahed Al-Mubarak, neither an arrest warrant nor a search warrant were presented to her by the Saudi intelligence upon entering her home. Al-Waleed Taha was prohibited from communicating with his wife who was standing in the next room.

According to Al-Qasem's brother, Mr Khaled Ahmad, there was also no search warrant presented during the search of Al-Qasem Ahmad's home. The intelligence officers were not forceful and attempted to calm the human rights defender's wife, telling her that her husband would only be away for 40 minutes of questioning and would be brought back. Al-Qasem Ahmad was able to call his wife for 30 seconds a few hours after the house search, where he said that he was safe and that there seems to have been a complaint made against Al-Waleed Taha and himself by the Sudanese government in Khartoum. He has not been heard from since.

The Saudi authorities have refused to disclose the location of the Sudanese human rights defenders to their families and lawyers, saying that it is "secret". The families of Al-Waleed Taha and Al-Qasem Ahmad fear that the defenders will be deported to Sudan where they are likely to face torture and/or ill-treatment for their continued work for human rights in Sudan.

Front Line Defenders condemns the detention of Al-Waleed Taha and Al-Qasem Ahmad by Saudi authorities as it believes it to be solely connected to their legitimate and peaceful work on promoting

and protecting human rights in Sudan. Front Line Defenders urges that the human rights defenders be immediately and unconditionally released and restitution.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Saudi Arabia to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Al-Waleed Imam Hasan Taha and Al-Qasem Mohammad Sayyed Ahmad as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being held solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Al-Waleed Imam Hasan Taha and Al-Qasem Mohammad Sayyed Ahmad, and ensure that their treatment, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;;
3. Ensure that Al-Waleed Imam Hasan Taha and Al-Qasem Mohammad Sayyed Ahmad have immediate and unfettered access to their families and lawyers;
4. Ensure that Al-Waleed Imam Hasan Taha and Al-Qasem Mohammad Sayyed Ahmad are not deported to Sudan and receive appropriate restitution;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.