

15 January 2020

Saudi Arabia: Waleed Abu Al-Khair's health deteriorates drastically while on hunger strike

On 9 January 2020, human rights defender **Waleed Abu Al-Khair** was transferred to a hospital. His health has drastically deteriorated due to the hunger strike he restarted on 11 December 2019, after being returned to solitary confinement.

[Waleed Abu Al-Khair](#) is a lawyer and head of the Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia, an organisation which monitors and documents human rights violations in Saudi Arabia. The application to register the organisation as a human rights NGO was rejected.

Human rights defender Waleed Abu Al-Khair started an open-ended hunger strike on 29 November 2019, to protest against the ill-treatment and solitary confinement he has been subjected to while in prison. On 10 December 2019, he ended his hunger strike after being moved back to his previous cell from the high security solitary confinement section. The next day, he restarted it when he was returned to solitary confinement. On 9 January 2020, after 30 days on hunger strike which caused his health to deteriorate drastically, the human rights defender was transferred to a hospital under high security measures. While in hospital, he was denied appropriate medical attention. He has been returned to solitary confinement since and has restarted his hunger strike.

The human rights defender was sentenced on 6 July 2014 to 15 years' imprisonment, a travel ban of equal duration, as well as a fine of 200,000 Saudi Riyal, on charges of "striving to overthrow the state and the authority of the King"; "criticising and insulting the judiciary"; "assembling international organisations against the Kingdom"; "creating and supervising an unlicensed organisation, and contributing to the establishment of another"; and, "preparing and storing information that will affect public security".

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the deteriorating health of human rights defender Waleed Abu Al-Khair, while on hunger strike, especially given that he suffers from diabetes. Front Line Defenders is also concerned about the ill-treatment he has been subjected to while in prison, which is believed to be directly linked to his peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Saudi Arabia to:

1. Immediately release Waleed Abu Al-Khair and quash his conviction as Front Line Defenders believes that he has been targeted solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work;
2. Provide the necessary medical treatment for Waleed Abu Al-Khair;
3. Ensure that the treatment of Waleed Abu Al-Khair, 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;
4. Cease targeting all 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.