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Saudi Arabia: After the expiry of his sentence, human rights defender Mohammed al-Qahtani's whereabouts are still unknown

On 22 November 2022, prominent Saudi human rights defender **Mohammed al-Qahtani** was due to be released from prison after the expiry of his 10-year prison sentence. However, the human rights defender has not yet been released. Since 24 October 2022, the Saudi Arabian authorities have denied Mohammed al-Qahtani contact with his family, and they refuse to disclose any information regarding his whereabouts.

[Mohammed al-Qahtani](#) is a prominent Saudi human rights defender, academic, and co-founder of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA). Mohammed al-Qahtani was arrested in June 2012 during a wave of arrests of Saudi human rights defenders and activists. He was sentenced to a 10-year prison sentence, followed by a travel ban of an equal length on charges including “breaking allegiance to the ruler” and “questioning the integrity of officials”. The ACPRA was also disbanded by court order.

Human rights defender Mohammed al-Qahtani was due to be released from prison on 22 November 2022 after a 10-year prison sentence. Despite the expiry of his sentence, the human rights defender has not been released. The Saudi Arabian authorities have refused to disclose any information regarding his whereabouts. On 30 October 2022, Mohammed al-Qahtani's wife contacted the prison to ask about him and was told that he was transferred to another prison and that they do not know the location of that prison. Since 24 October 2022, the human rights defender has been denied visits and contact with his family.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the enforced disappearance of human rights defender Mohammed al-Qahtani. It believes that it is part of a trend of harassment by the Saudi Arabian authorities against human rights defenders, activists and journalists where they are kept in prison despite the expiry of their sentences or have them re-trialed rather than freed.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Saudi Arabia to:

1. Take all necessary measures to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Mohammed al-Qahtani and guarantee his physical and psychological security and integrity, as well as that of his family;
2. Inform the family of Mohammed al-Qahtani of the place of his detention, and allow them immediate and unfettered access to him;

3. 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.