

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
Promoting human rights by protecting those who defend them

www.lrwc.org – lrwc@portal.ca – Tel: +1 604 736 1175 – Fax: +1 604 736 1170
3220 West 13th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. CANADA V6K 2V5

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His Majesty, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
King of Saudi Arabia and Custodian of the two
Holy Mosques
Fax: +966 11 403 3125
Email: info@moi.gov.sa

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin
Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Minister of Interior
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 403 3125
Email: info@moi.gov.sa

H.E. Abdulaziz Alwasil
Ambassador
Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi
Arabia to the United Nations Office in Geneva,
Switzerland
Fax: +41 22 758 00 00
Email: saudiameission@bluewin.ch
Your Excellencies:

H.E. Waleed bin Mohammad Al Samaani
Minister of Justice
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 401 1741
+966 11 402 0311
+966 11 405 5399

H.E. Adel bin Ahmed El Jubeir
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Fax: +966 11 403 0645
Email: info@mofa.gov.sa

H.E. Abdulrahman bin Soliman Al-Ahmed
Ambassador
Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Brussels, Belgium
Fax: +32 2 6468538
Email : beemb@mofa.gov.sa

Re: Urgent Appeal for Release of Sudanese Social Justice Activists Waleed Imam and Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed

Lawyers Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) is a committee of lawyers and other human rights defenders who campaign internationally for advocacy rights, advocates in danger, and on rule of law issues and engage in legal research and education about international human rights law. I am a lawyer and a partner of a law firm in Canada, Cohen Highley LLP.

Founding members of Abna' Al-Sahafa (Citizen of Al-Sahafa) in Khartoum, Messrs. Waleed Imam and Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed were providing assistance and basic services to Sudanese people in need.

Since they left Sudan for Saudi Arabia for work reasons in 1998 and 2013 respectively, they have remained active in the organization from Riyadh, providing logistic and financial support for those in need of medicine and medical treatment in Sudan. Moreover, Mr. Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed is managing a *Facebook* page that has over 80,000 members calling for peaceful

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political transformation in Sudan. He was active during the recent disobedience movement in Sudan.

LRWC has been informed by reliable sources about the arrest and detention of Messrs. **Waleed Imam** and **Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed**, two Sudanese social media activists residing in Saudi Arabia, where they continue advocating for the respect of human rights in Sudan.

According to the information received, on December 20, 2016, two units of Saudi security forces arrested Messrs, Waleed Imam and Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed, as they were heading to their cars outside their workplace in Riyadh. Following their arrest, they were taken to their homes where four security personnel searched their houses before taking them to an unknown place. No arrest or search warrants were presented during the search and Mr. Waleed Imam was prevented from communicating with his wife who was standing in the next room.

Mr. Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed, whose mobile phone was confiscated during the search, called his wife at around 2 am for only 40 seconds from a prison in Riyadh. They have been held incommunicado since their arrest. No reason for their arrest has been given and their whereabouts remain unknown as of publication of this appeal.

According to information received, several officials of the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) would have since arrived in Saudi Arabia in order to interrogate the two above-mentioned human rights defenders.

LRWC strongly condemns the arrest and incommunicado and secret detention of Messrs. Waleed Imam and Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed. These cases illustrate the repressive trend targeting Sudanese human rights defenders residing abroad as the Sudanese Government exercises pressure to harass its nationals carrying out human rights activities abroad.

LRWC is greatly concerned that the two would be at risk of torture and ill-treatment if they were sent back to Sudan, which would be contrary to Saudi Arabia's obligations under Articles 3 of the United Nations Convention against Torture.

LRWC urges authorities in Saudi Arabia to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Messrs. Waleed Imam and Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed and release them immediately and unconditionally as their detention is arbitrary since it only seems to aim at sanctioning their human rights activities.

LRWC urges you to:

1. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Messrs. Waleed Imam and Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed and all human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia;
2. Immediately disclose the whereabouts of Messrs. Waleed Imam and Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed and release them immediately and unconditionally as their detention is arbitrary since it only seems to aim at sanctioning their human rights activities;
3. Guarantee the confidential access by Messrs. Messrs. Waleed Imam and Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed to lawyers of their choice;

4. Put an end to all acts of harassment – including at the judicial level – against Messrs. Waleed Imam and Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed and all human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia;
5. Conform in any circumstances with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the UN General Assembly, in particular its Articles 1, 6, 8, 9 and 12.2;
6. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights instruments ratified by Saudi Arabia, and most notably to comply with Article 3 of the Convention against Torture (CAT), to which Saudi Arabia is a party, which states that “no State Party shall expel, return (“refouler”) or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture”.

LRWC is hopeful you will ensure prompt and thorough investigations of the allegations outlined above and take steps necessary to implement the remedies required including the immediate release of Messrs. Waleed Imam and Algasim Mohamed Sidahmed. Your confirmation of receipt of this correspondence and actions to be taken would be appreciated.

Yours Very Truly,



Joe Hoffer
Sudan Monitor, Lawyers Rights Watch Canada

Copied to:
Mr. Michel Forst
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders
Fax: +41 22 917 9006
Email: defenders@ohchr.org

Mr. David Kaye
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression
Fax: +41 22 917 9006
Email: freedex@ohchr.org

Working Group on Arbitrary Detention
Fax: +41 22 917 9006
Email: wgad@ohchr.org

Dr. Nils Melzer
Special Rapporteur on Torture
Email : sr-torture@ohchr.org