

Rt Hon Theresa May MP – Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
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17th November 2016

Urgent: Death penalty in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to you from Reprieve regarding your visit to the December Gulf Cooperation Council summit in Bahrain. I believe the summit presents an important opportunity for the Government to secure the release of several people who face the death penalty in relation to protests in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. We have raised these cases with you before, and I understand the Foreign Office is monitoring them closely.

As you will be aware, we are assisting several people who were sentenced to death as children by the Saudi authorities for their alleged involvement in protests calling for reform. Among them are Ali al Nimr, Dawoud al Marhoon and Abdullah al Zaher, who were sentenced to death despite having been 17, 17 and 15 at the time of the alleged offences. All three juveniles were tortured into 'confessions' that were used to convict them in secretive, unfair trials. Reprieve is also investigating several similar cases involving juveniles, which raise the same concerns.

Last year your predecessor, David Cameron, publicly called on the Saudi authorities to halt the planned executions of the Ali, Dawood and Abdullah, and I understand that the Foreign Secretary raised the cases with his Saudi counterpart as recently as September. While the UK has been focused on seeking assurances that the death sentences will not be carried out, we believe it is now vital for the Government to press Saudi Arabia to commute the sentences, and release the juveniles.

We have also recently written to you about Mohammed Ramadan, a policeman and a father of three who faces imminent execution in Bahrain, after he attended a protest calling for reform. Mr Ramadan was tortured into a 'confession' before being sentenced to death on charges relating to an attack on a police officer. Mr Ramadan's shocking case is far from isolated; indeed, we have serious concerns for a second man, Hussain Moosa, who was arrested and tortured into a 'confession' on similar charges. No evidence, aside from these forced confessions and the testimony of police officers, was produced in court to link either man to the alleged crime.

As you're aware, the UK-funded prison Ombudsman has now investigated Mr Ramadan's case, and passed its findings to the Bahrain's Special Investigations Unit (SIU); a strong indication that the Ombudsman has found credible evidence that he was tortured.

Finally, we are also deeply alarmed at reports that the authorities in Kuwait have lowered the age of eligibility for the death penalty. The Kuwaiti Government has announced that, from next year, anyone aged 16 or more who is arrested "will be tried by a regular court, and not the

juvenile court, which means the death penalty for some crimes.”¹ The execution of under-18s is prohibited under international law.

I hope you agree that, given Britain’s principled opposition to the death penalty, the UK Government has a duty to use its close ties with Gulf countries to push strongly against executions and related abuses in the region. This must include calling for an end to the use of the death penalty and torture, against both juveniles and people arrested in relation to protests.

I would therefore ask that you use your attendance at the GCC summit to:

- 1) Urge the Saudi authorities to commute the death sentences of Ali al Nimr, Dawood al Marhoon, and Abdullah al Zaher, and those of any other juveniles facing the death penalty in the country;
- 2) Call on the Bahraini Government to commute the death sentences handed to Mohammed Ramadan and Hussain Moosa, and to release the two men.
- 3) Request that Kuwait’s Government urgently call off its plans to lower to 16 the age at which individuals can receive the death penalty.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you or your team require any information about these cases, or others, ahead of your attendance at the summit.

Yours sincerely,



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¹ ‘Juvenile age lowered to 16 in Kuwait’, Gulf News, 10th November 2016:
<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/juvenile-age-lowered-to-16-in-kuwait-1.1927376>