



President Donald Trump  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

10<sup>th</sup> May 2017

## **Urgent: Juvenile beheadings in Saudi Arabia**

Dear Mr President,

I am writing to you from the rights group Reprieve regarding your upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia. Ahead of your trip, I wanted to draw your attention to the impending executions of juveniles in the Kingdom.

Reprieve is currently assisting three Saudi juveniles who face execution on charges relating to their attendance at peaceful protests. The three boys – Ali al-Nimr, Dawoud al-Marhoon and Abdullah al-Zaher – were children of 17, 17 and 15 respectively when they were arrested in 2012, as the Saudi authorities began a widespread crackdown on protests.

All three were tortured by security forces until they signed false confessions. These coerced – and unlawfully obtained – statements were used against them in extremely secretive trials in the controversial Specialised Criminal Court (SCC). The charges against them included such so-called crimes as giving first aid to protestors and using a Blackberry to encourage others to join protests. Their trials were rife with due process violations; for example, none of the boys was ever allowed to meet with a lawyer.

Ultimately, Ali, Dawood and Abdullah were sentenced to death by beheading, and the Public Prosecutor requested that Ali be executed by crucifixion.

The boys' death warrants now await the King's signature, and all three could be executed at any time. Reprieve has also identified at least three more juveniles who face execution for alleged offences relating to protests.

As you will no doubt be aware, it is illegal to sentence to death and execute people who were under the age of 18 at the time of their alleged offence. This prohibition is a well-established principle in both US and international law; it is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Saudi Arabia is party. Any move to execute the three young men will be in gross violation of Saudi Arabia's international obligations.

Saudi Arabia has already executed at least four juveniles since 2016. Among them was Ali al-Ribh, who was executed on 2 January 2016 for attending the same peaceful protests as Ali,

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Reprieve, PO Box 72054      T +44 (0)20 7553 8140      info@reprieve.org.uk  
London UK, EC3P 3BZ      F +44 (0)20 7553 8189      www.reprieve.org.uk

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Dawoud and Abdullah when he was just 17. Ali al-Ribh was dragged out of school by security forces and tortured into making a false ‘confession’, which was later used as the sole piece of evidence to secure his death sentence.

The Saudi government has insisted that Ali, Dawoud and Abdullah’s alleged attendance at protests makes them ‘terrorists’ deserving of execution. I am sure you will agree that persecuting innocent children in the name of the global fight against terrorism is unjust, unlawful and ultimately counterproductive.

Moreover, the prohibition against the execution of children and the right to peaceful free expression are not only core American values; they are essential domestic and international legal requirements, which are binding on Saudi Arabia.

It is imperative that the Kingdom’s closest allies – including the US – call on the Saudi authorities to uphold these obligations. Your upcoming visit provides you with an opportunity to do this.

Given that the three boys may be executed any day, I urge you to:

- (1) Use your visit to Riyadh to call for the release of Ali, Dawoud and Abdullah, as well as other juveniles facing execution;
- (2) Make clear that the US condemns the use of the death penalty against peaceful protestors and children, and;
- (3) Urge the Saudi authorities to respect internationally-protected fair trial rights, and to halt the use of torture evidence and secret trials against alleged dissidents.

If you need any further information about these issues before your trip, please do not hesitate to have your team contact me via the details below or via Reprieve’s Middle East and North Africa caseworker, Ben Pitler, at [ben.pitler@reprieve.org.uk](mailto:ben.pitler@reprieve.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,

**Maya Foa**  
Director  
Reprieve  
[maya.foa@reprieve.org.uk](mailto:maya.foa@reprieve.org.uk)

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Reprieve, PO Box 72054	T +44 (0)20 7553 8140	<a href="mailto:info@reprieve.org.uk">info@reprieve.org.uk</a>
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