

UA 60/22

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## **SAUDI ARABIA**

### **ARRESTED AT 14, TORTURED, NOW FACES EXECUTION**

Abdullah al-Huwaiti, who was arrested when he was 14, is at imminent risk of execution in Saudi Arabia. On 13 June 2022, the Appeals Court upheld his death sentence after a grossly unfair trial. During his time in detention, he was held in solitary confinement, denied access to a lawyer, and forced to “confess” under duress. On 2 March 2022, he was re-sentenced to death by a Criminal Court in Tabuk on charges which included armed robbery and the murder of a security officer. Amnesty International calls on the Supreme Court and the King to not ratify Abdullah al-Huwaiti’s death sentence, quash his conviction, and re-try him in proceedings that are fully consistent with international fair trial standards, without resort to the death penalty.

Abdullah al-Huwaiti was only 14 years old at the time of his arrest and when he was tried with five other defendants on 11 May 2017. Following a re-trial ordered by the Supreme Court in 2021, he was re-sentenced to death by a Criminal Court in Tabuk on 2 March 2022.

During his detention, Abdullah al-Huwaiti was detained in solitary confinement for four months and was not allowed to speak to his family and access a lawyer throughout this period and during interrogation. Despite the fact that he was a child at the time of arrest, he was detained in the criminal investigations unit of Tabuk instead of the juvenile detention centre (Dar Al Mulahaza). Abdullah al-Huwaiti told the court: “Everything in the ‘confession’ is not true, and I was forced to confess as I was beaten and threatened... I was also told to change my testimony to match that of other defendants”. Abdullah al-Huwaiti refused to sign his testimony as he maintained it is not true; yet, the court refused to withdraw his testimony and consequently sentenced him to death.

The Saudi Human Rights Commission said in a statement to Amnesty International in February 2022 that the country no longer executes individuals “for crimes committed by minors” and has commuted all such outstanding sentences. Meanwhile, Abdullah al-Huwaiti’s death sentence was still upheld following a re-trial.

#### **Write to the King urging him to:**

- not to ratify the death sentence of Abdullah al-Huwaiti
- quash his conviction, given the grave concerns about the fairness of his trial and his age at the time of arrest, and to order a re-trial in proceedings that are fully consistent with international fair trial standards, without resort to the death penalty
- order a prompt, impartial, independent, and effective investigation into his claims before the court of torture and ill-treatment
- immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia.

**Write to:**

King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud

Office of His Majesty the King

Royal Court, Riyadh

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Salutation: Your Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud:

**And Copy:**

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**Additional information**

On 27 October 2019, Abdullah al-Huwaiti was initially convicted to death by a Criminal Court in Tabuk on charges related to “gang formation and armed robbery of a jewellery store”, “the killing of a security officer intentionally and aggressively”, “robbery of gold” and “hiding the weapons used and the stolen gold.” On 10 November 2021, the Supreme Court overturned his death sentence and ordered a re-trial. On 2 March 2022, Abdullah al-Huwaiti was convicted on the same evidence and re-sentenced to death by the Criminal Court in Tabuk.

In the absence of transparent information around judicial processes in Saudi Arabia, particularly in death penalty cases, families only find out about the fate of their loved ones through the media. Amnesty International’s assessment of the Appeals Court’s decision to uphold the conviction and death sentence of Abdullah al-Huwaiti indicates he will be at imminent risk of execution as soon as the Supreme Court ratifies it, which could be at any moment, since families are not informed when the King ratifies death sentences at the final stage.

A Royal Order issued in 2020 announced an end to the use of the death penalty against people below the age of 18 at the time of the crime. However, the Royal Order does not extend to cases involving Saudi Arabia’s main counterterrorism law, the Penal Law for Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing (2017), and more generally hadd crimes (those with fixed and severe punishments) or crimes punishable by qesas (retribution-in-kind) under sharia law.

On 13 March 2022, Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Interior announced [the execution of 81 people](#), in a shocking mass execution of people who had been convicted of a wide range of offences, including “terrorism”-related crimes, murder, armed robbery and arms smuggling. A number of those executed were also convicted of offences such as “disrupting the social fabric and national cohesion” and “participating in and inciting sit-ins and protests” which describe acts that are protected by the rights

of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. 41 of those executed were from Saudi Arabia's Shi'a minority.

In 2021, Amnesty International [documented](#) a sharp rise of 140% in executions carried out by the Saudi Arabian authorities, from 27 in 2020 to 65, including 1 woman. The rising executions trend continues into 2022, with 120 people executed so far between January and June 2022.

As of today, 144 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. The organization campaigns for total abolition of this cruel punishment.