

10 June 2009

Human Rights Council  
Eleventh Session

Item 6  
“Consideration of UPR reports”

Oral Intervention by Amnesty International on Saudi Arabia

Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes Saudi Arabia's engagement with the UPR and notes its commitment to consider a wide range of recommendations. We regret, however, the decision to reject a range of recommendations, particularly those relating to the death penalty.

The government uses the death penalty against juvenile offenders in defiance of international law.<sup>1</sup> The latest reminder of such defiance is the beheading on 10 May 2009 of two men who were children at the time of their alleged crimes.<sup>2</sup> The death penalty is used extensively in Saudi Arabia for offences with no lethal consequences and disproportionately against foreign nationals. It is invariably imposed and carried out after secret and summary trials on defendants provided with no legal assistance.

We call on the government to reconsider recommendations to establish a moratorium on all executions.<sup>3</sup> It should also commute outstanding death sentences against individuals alleged to have committed crimes while under the age of 18 and urgently prohibit unequivocally the execution of such offenders.

Mr President,

Amnesty International regrets that, during the review, states failed to engage Saudi Arabia substantively on the wide range of human rights violations committed in the name of counter-terrorism.

Thousands of people arrested on counter-terrorism grounds are currently detained under conditions of virtually total secrecy; some are prisoners of conscience.<sup>4</sup> Most are held without charge or trial and without access to a lawyer or to the courts to challenge the legality of their detention. Many are alleged to have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated in order to extract confessions from them. Hundreds now face secret and summary trials and possible execution.

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<sup>1</sup> Convention of the Rights of the Child, Article 37, to which Saudi Arabia is a party.

<sup>2</sup> Sultan bin Sulayman bin Muslim al-Muwallad and 'Issa bin Muhammad 'Umar Muhammad were both 17 years old at the time of the alleged crimes.

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/WG.6/4/L.9, paragraphs 48 (d), 65 (b) and 71 (b).

<sup>4</sup> Among the prisoners of conscience are a group of eight reformists, including Dr Saud al-Hashimi, a medical doctor, and Dr 'Abdel Rahman al-Shumayri, a university professor. Since their arrest on 3 February 2007 all eight have been held in solitary confinement. Dr Saud al-Hashimi has been on hunger strike since 1 June 2009 in protest at his detention and is said to have been tortured on 5 and 6 June for refusing to take food. He is said to be in need of medical treatment.

We call on the government to release all prisoners of conscience unconditionally and without delay. The government must end arbitrary arrest and ensure that anyone held is charged with a recognizable criminal offence, protected from torture and given a prompt and fair trial.

Thank you Mr President.