



Saudi Human Rights Lawyer Waleed Abu al-Khair Sentenced to Fifteen Years Imprisonment

13 January 2014 – Today, the Specialized Criminal Court of Saudi Arabia ordered human rights lawyer Waleed Abu al-Khair to complete his fifteen year prison sentence without the possibility of parole after he refused to show remorse or recognize the legitimacy of the court. Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy reiterate their call for the Government of Saudi Arabia to immediately release Abu al-Khair and overturn the politically-motivated conviction against him.

On 6 July 2014, Abu al-Khair was [convicted by the Specialized Criminal Court](#) in Jeddah under anti-terrorism legislation of “making international organizations hostile to the kingdom,” “publicly slandering the judiciary,” and “founding an unlicensed organization.” The court [sentenced](#) Abu al-Khair to 15 years in prison, a 15 year travel ban, and a fine equivalent to \$53,000, but stipulated that he could serve the final five years of his sentence on parole.

In addition to being a human rights lawyer, Abu al-Khair is the founder and director of the [Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia](#) (MHRSA). He is best known for representing blogger [Raif Badawi](#), who was sentenced in 2014 to 1,000 lashes, ten years in prison, and a one-million Saudi Riyals fine for insulting Islam after he created a public forum for debate. Abu al-Khair [said](#) that he rejects the verdict and refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of the court and its ruling.

We, the undersigned human rights organizations, call on the United States, the European Union, and other national and international bodies to actively engage the Government of Saudi Arabia to:

- Immediately vacate Waleed Abu al-Khair’s conviction, release him from custody, and drop all charges against him in relation to or in retaliation against his work;
- Replace anti-terrorism laws with legislation that does not encroach upon human rights; and
- Ensure that all civil society organizations and human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia are able to conduct their work without fear of retaliation or reprisal.