



8 October 2015 – Brussels – Today, the European Parliament (EP) adopted an Urgency resolution that condemns the imminent execution of Ali Mohammed al-Nimr and calls on King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud to “grant pardon or to commute his sentence.” Saudi authorities arrested al-Nimr when he was 17 years old for participating in protests in Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province, and then crucify his remains in a public area. The European Centre for Democracy & Human Rights (ECDHR), alongside Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), welcome the resolution and call on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to immediately adopt and enforce its recommendations.

“The European Parliament, a co-legislator of the European Union, and an institution directly representing the will of European citizens has now called for a stay of Ali al-Nimr’s execution,” said Isabel Cerdá Marcos, Advocacy Associate at ECDHR. “The resolution is a strong demonstration that the Saudi government can no longer count on the international community to look the other way as it commits severe and systemic human rights violations.”

In February 2012, Saudi authorities arrested al-Nimr for participating in dissident protests in Qatif, an urban sector of the Eastern Province where the nation’s marginalized Shia constitute a majority. In detention, officials affiliated with the Ministry of Interior allegedly tortured him severely. Through repeated beatings, they coerced him into confessing to a series of charges, including joining a “terrorist cell”, targeting police with Molotov cocktails, and robbing a pharmacy. The Specialized Criminal Court, Saudi Arabia’s national security tribunal, later used this confession to sentence al-Nimr to death. During both his interrogation and trial, Saudi authorities blocked al-Nimr from contacting an attorney, and several of his trial hearings were convened in secret.

“As a former prisoner of conscience who was myself subjected to torture and made to stand trial before a military court, I find the details of al-Nimr’s case deplorable,” said Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Director of Advocacy at BIRD. “This is why the EP’s adoption of today’s resolution, particularly its calls to abolish the Specialized Criminal Court and investigate allegations of torture, is so welcome.”

As indicated in the resolution, al-Nimr’s execution marks the troubling continuance of several trends in Saudi Arabia. The first is the steep increase in executions; from August 2014 to August 2015, [Saudi authorities executed 175 people](#), a capital punishment rate higher than any comparable 12-month period in the country during the last decade. The second is the Saudi government’s disregard for its international human rights obligations. Saudi Arabia is a state party to both the Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The former obligates the government to investigate the allegations of torture against al-Nimr, while the latter, per the resolution, “strictly prohibits the use of the death penalty for crimes committed by anyone below the age of 18.” These

trends are also visible in the case of Dawood al-Marhoon, another Eastern Province protester in imminent danger of capital punishment who, like al-Nimr, was also arrested at 17.

“Saudi Arabia seeks greater integration into the international community in terms of economic and military ties,” stated Husain Abdulla, Executive Director of ADHRB, “but it refuses to abide by its basic laws. Today, the EU has sent a strong message that continued partnership relies upon adherence to fundamental human rights norms.”

ECDHR, ADHRB, and BIRD fully support the resolution’s calls on the Saudi government to:

- Commute the sentence of Ali al-Nimr;
- Abolish the Specialized Criminal Court;
- Promptly and impartially investigate allegations of torture against al-Nimr; and
- Increase its engagement with the UN Human Rights Council and with the European Union bodies