



25 October 2015 – More than a year since a Saudi Arabian court [sentenced](#) leading opposition activist Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr to death, authorities announced that his appeal has been refused and his death sentence upheld. Sheikh al-Nimr's family and lawyer reported on Saturday that both the Court of Appeals and the Saudi Supreme Court endorsed al-Nimr's sentence, and sent his death sentence to King Salman for approval and to the Ministry of Interior for implementation of the court's sentence of death by beheading. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) and the European Saudi Organization for Human Rights (ESOHR) strongly condemn the news of Sheikh Nimr's imminent execution and call on King Salman to reject the court's sentence and stay his execution.

With this news, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr is now at risk of imminent execution, as there remains no legal hurdle to appeal the sentence. Sheikh al-Nimr is a 56-year-old prominent human rights activist and scholar, who has campaigned for reforms within Saudi Arabia and was arrested in July 2012 during the height of the Arab Spring. After a violent arrest, in which he was shot four times, he was detained for more than two years, before being sentenced in October 2014 to death on charges related to his peaceful calls for reforms in a secret and closed court hearing. He has now been incarcerated for more three years, where he detained in Al-Haa'ir in Riyadh.

International pressure on the Saudi authorities with regards to Sheikh Nimr's harsh sentence has been strong. UN experts have [urged](#) Saudi Arabia to "halt the execution of Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr" after citing numerous due process concerns. Sheikh Nimr's trial appears to be in contravention of several articles of the UNDR, with the experts concluding that al-Nimr's trial did not "meet the international standards relating to the right to a fair trial. Concern is expressed that Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr had no full and privileged access to his legal representative." While the [UK](#) and [EU](#) have both said they continue to "closely monitor" Sheikh Nimr's case, the US Department of State has stayed largely silent.

"Saudi Arabia has executed [more than 130 people](#) in 2015 and now, after more than a year and increased international pressure to stay the executions of a group of minors, Saudi Arabia has instead decided to move forward with the execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr due to his peaceful calls for reform in the Kingdom," said Husain Abdulla, Executive Director of ADHRB. "The case against Sheikh Nimr represents a clear violation to his rights of freedom of speech and assembly. If Saudi Arabia's international allies, including the US, takes its own [rhetoric](#) seriously and believes that freedom of expression is a 'fundamental right for all' then it must publicly call on King Salman to stay Sheikh Nimr's execution."

Such a death sentence against a peaceful activist coupled with the recent increase in death sentence endorsements by the King signals a new low in Saudi Arabia's attempts to silence all forms of dissent within the country. The endorsement of Sheikh Al-Nimr's death penalty follows Saudi courts decisions to uphold death sentences for three young activists, who were minors at the time of arrest, which have sparked international outrage. One of these minors, Ali Al-Nimr, is Sheikh Nimr's nephew. ADHRB and ESOHR express deep concern that Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr's execution could be the first of many more executions of innocent activists to follow.