

His Majesty
King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud
Office of the King
Royal Diwan
Riyadh
Saudi Arabia

Re: Concerns regarding former lawyer Sheikh Suliman Ibrahim Al-Reshoudi

Your Majesty,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it has also observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its serious concerns over the situation of Sheikh Suliman Ibrahim Al-Reshoudi sentenced on 22 November 2011 by the Saudi Special Criminal Court to 15 years' imprisonment as well as 15 years' travel ban to start following the completion of his sentence.

Suliman Ibrahim Al-Reshoudi, a former lawyer and a well-known human rights defender, was convicted after an apparently grossly unfair trial, where he was convicted on charges including mobilizing the public against the monarchy, forming a secret organisation, financing terrorism, and money laundering. Suliman Ibrahim Al-Reshoudi, aged 74 and in poor health, was released on bail while the trial was on-going.

The CCBE is informed that Suliman Ibrahim Al-Reshoudi was arrested in Jeddah on 2 February 2007 by members of Saudi security forces, when he was about to lodge a complaint with the Saudi authorities regarding the detention without trial of his clients. He had been arrested a number of times before, including in 2004 for signing a petition calling for reforms in Saudi Arabia, and in 1993 when he co-founded the Legal Rights Committee.

Especially worrisome is that Sheikh Suliman Ibrahim Al-Reshoudi, a member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association, was held in pre-trial detention for more than four years, which clearly violated the Saudi Penal Procedures Code which provides for a maximum of six months of pre-trial detention.

The CCBE notes that while in detention following his arrest, he was held incommunicado and suffered lengthy solitary confinement. During the initial weeks of his detention, it is reported that he was subjected to psychological ill-treatment, including attempts to blackmail him through financial offers to him and his relatives.

One year after his arrest, Suliman Ibrahim Al-Reshoudi was taken to Arfan Hospital despite the fact that he had not made any complaints regarding his health. He was subsequently held in a cell inside the hospital for more than 16 months without an explanation. For a total of 30 months he was held in solitary confinement without access to natural light or exercise. He suffered ill health as a result, including a back condition and severe pains in the joints as well as lack of sleep. This was

compounded by restricted family visits during which he and members of his family were closely watched by guards. His cell was raided regularly and items like pens and plastic cups were confiscated as a form of punishment or intimidation.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.

CCBE believes that the detention and trial of Suliman Ibrahim Al-Reshoudi is directly related to his advocacy for peaceful political and legal reform and his work for the protection and promotion of human rights, including taking part in the circulation of a petition calling for political reform and his support for the establishment of an independent human rights organisation in Saudi Arabia.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take effective steps to reconsider immediately and unconditionally the situation of Suliman Ibrahim Al-Reshoudi, in order to assure him a fair trial and sentence. Furthermore, the CCBE respectfully urges you to guarantee that in all circumstances human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia are able to conduct their professional duties without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Dal', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Georges-Albert Dal

President