

**King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

Brussels, 23 October 2013

Re: Concerns regarding the arrest of Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair, a human rights lawyer

Your Excellency,

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 also has 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 arrest of Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair, a prominent human rights defender and lawyer and founder of "Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia" who has been actively engaged in the defence of activists jailed without charges and of women banned from voting in Saudi Arabia.

According to the information we have received, on 2 October 2013 Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair was arrested in Jeddah on charges of "organising illegal gatherings" in his house. Following his arrest, on 3 October 2013, Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair was reportedly questioned by the Jeddah Public Prosecutor and released on bail.

The arrest of Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair constitutes the latest step in the judicial harassment against this human rights lawyer who has been the target of several hostile acts over the last two years. The CCBE has been informed that, since 2012, Waleed Abu Al-Khair has been tried before the Saudi Special Criminal Court on charges of, among other things, "calling for a constitutional monarchy," "talking to the media with the intention of harming the reputation of country," "insulting the judiciary and its staff," and "communicating with foreign quarters." In addition, in March 2012, the Ministry of the Interior confirmed that, following a decision of the Investigation and Public Prosecution Authority, a travel ban was imposed on Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair for an indefinite period.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your Excellency's 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, economics or other

sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Moreover Article 23 states that:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right 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 organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognized standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges your Excellency to take immediate and effective steps to ensure that all the charges against Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair are dropped. The CCBE also implores you to guarantee that human rights lawyers in Saudi Arabia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities, in all circumstances, without fear of reprisal and free from all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Tsouroulis', written in a cursive style.

EVANGELOS TSOUROULIS
CCBE President