

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
R O U N D T A B L E

Washington, D.C.

28 May 2015

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini
Rue de la Loi 242/Wetstraat 242
1046
Bruxelles/Brussel

Madame High Representative,

We the undersigned NGOs write to you today to express our grave concern regarding the capital punishment of Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr. It has come to our attention that Sheikh al-Nimr may be in imminent danger of being executed for crimes related to peaceful free expression. It is particularly alarming that his death sentence for these offenses allegedly arose from an unfair trial.

Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr is a respected religious scholar and defender of human rights in Saudi Arabia. On 15 October 2014 he was convicted by the Specialized Criminal Court of several charges including “disobeying the ruler, sowing discord, undermining national unity, and interfering in the affairs of a sisterly nation.” It has been reported that, in securing this conviction, the prosecution presented evidence obtained under duress or through coercive means. It has also been alleged that Sheikh al-Nimr, for his part, was prevented from mounting a proper defense. Throughout the trial, the judge displayed bias toward the prosecution, and a disregard for due process. Such misconduct notwithstanding, the court sentenced Sheikh al-Nimr to death.

Sheikh al-Nimr’s death sentence is a direct violation of the basic human rights to freedom of expression, freedom of religious and political association, and freedom of assembly. Capital punishment does not fit the ‘crime’ of peaceful religious expression.

According to the European Union’s guidelines for the death penalty, third states should only use the death penalty based on the provisions contained in international human rights while maintaining maximum transparency. The guidelines also state that in cases where these standards are violated, the EU will consider making specific demarches. We believe Sheikh al-Nimr was not granted his international right to due process or legal representation. Given the nature of the charges against Sheikh al-Nimr and the abridgment of democracy that his death sentence represents, we respectfully request that the EU and the EEAS intervene on his behalf by issuing a public statement condemning his sentence and demanding his immediate release. We additionally request that the EEAS contact the Government of Saudi Arabia and directly register its concerns regarding his detention.

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Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

ORGANIZATIONS

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain

American Humanist Association

American Islamic Congress

Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy

Center for Inquiry

European Saudi Organization for Human Rights

Human Rights Law Foundation

Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church of America

Reprieve

Shia Rights Watch

Universal Muslim Association of America

INDIVIDUALS

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