



14 February 2016 marks the fourth anniversary of the [arrest](#) of Ali al-Nimr, the nephew of the recently executed Shia cleric and human rights activist Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr. The Government of Saudi Arabia arrested Ali when he was 17 years old for alleged crimes related to his freedom of speech and assembly, including participating in anti-government protests. The government has since sentenced him to [death](#) by beheading. We, the undersigned NGOs, demand that Saudi Arabia repeal the death penalty against Ali al-Nimr and all other protesters who were arrested as minors, including Dawood Hussein al-Marhoon and Abdullah Hasan al-Zaher.

We are concerned that the recent [execution](#) of Sheikh Nimr may normalize the use of the death penalty against activists in Saudi Arabia. For this reason, the international community must urgently call on the Government of Saudi Arabia to commute the death sentences of Ali al-Nimr, Dawood Hussein al-Marhoon, and Abdullah Hasan al-Zaher and all others sentenced to death for exercising their universal human rights.

Ali al-Nimr is a young pro-democracy activist from Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. Saudi security forces [arrested](#) Ali in February 2012 for his [participation](#) in demonstrations that took place across Saudi Arabia between 2011 and 2012. He was 17 years old at the time of his arrest. Ali's family members [reported](#) that the authorities did not permit them to [visit](#) Ali for four months after his arrest, and they held him for nine months before taking him before a judge.

During interrogations, Saudi authorities reportedly [tortured](#) Ali in order to coerce a confession, which he signed under duress without reading. The court refused to order an investigation into Ali's allegations of torture. Officials frequently prohibited Ali from accessing a lawyer during his detention, and once Ali obtained a lawyer, prison officials [prevented](#) Ali's lawyer from visiting him in prison to help prepare his defense.

Saudi officials [brought](#) Ali before a court for the first time in December 2013. He did not have access to a lawyer during the hearing, and the authorities did not provide Ali with a copy of the charges against him. On 27 May 2014, the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), a national security tribunal tasked with prosecuting crimes related to terrorism, [sentenced](#) Ali to death on a number of charges. His alleged crimes [included](#) breaking allegiance with the ruler, going out to marches and demonstrations, and using his cell phone to incite demonstrations. The court also accused him of sheltering wanted men and attacking police officers, though prosecutors did not present evidence of injuries to police officers to support these allegations. The judiciary [based](#) Ali's conviction solely on his coerced confession. On 14 September 2015, the Saudi media reported that the Supreme Court had [upheld](#) Ali's death sentence.

The Government of Saudi Arabia has arrested and imprisoned a number of Shia activists in recent years, including for activities such as [promoting](#) reconciliation between Sunni and Shia and [participating](#) in protests calling for political reforms. The SCC has also [sentenced](#) a number of Shia activists to long

prison sentences or death for their participation in protests. Ali is one of [seven individuals](#) sentenced to death for their roles in Eastern Province protests during 2011-2012, and one of three men sentenced to death for crimes committed as minors.

Saudi security forces [arrested](#) Dawood Hussein al-Marhoon on 22 May 2012, when he was 17 years old; and Abdullah Hasan al-Zaher on 3 March 2012, when he was 15 years old. Both Dawood and Abdullah say that Saudi officials denied them access to lawyers during interrogations and [tortured](#) them into confessing. The Specialized Criminal Court [convicted](#) Dawood and Abdullah on similar charges in October 2014, including taking part in protests, allegedly carrying out an armed robbery, and participating in the killing of police officers by making and using Molotov cocktails. In October 2015, the Saudi government reportedly [moved](#) Ali, Dawood, and Abdullah to new prisons and placed them in solitary confinement. With their appeals exhausted, the Government of Saudi Arabia could carry out their executions at any time.

The international community has repeatedly called on the Government of Saudi Arabia to repeal the death sentences against Ali, Dawood, and Abdullah. On 22 September 2015, several UN human rights experts [urged](#) Saudi Arabia to halt the execution of Ali al-Nimr and to “establish a moratorium” on the use of the death penalty. They further determined that Ali’s trial had violated international fair trial standards. On 8 October 2015, the EU Parliament [adopted](#) an urgency resolution condemning the imminent execution of Ali al-Nimr and calling on King Salman to grant a pardon or commute his sentence.

Saudi Arabia acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1996, which prohibits the imposition of death sentences for offenses committed by anyone under the age of 18 years old. The sentencing of Ali, Dawood, and Abdullah violates Saudi Arabia’s obligations under international law.

We demand that Saudi Arabia repeal the death sentences against Ali al-Nimr, Dawood Hussein al-Marhoon, and Abdullah Hasan al-Zaher and release them.

Signed,

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)

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Article 19

Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)

CIVICUS

Dewany

European Center for Democracy & Human Rights (ECDHR)

European-Saudi Organization for Human Rights (ESOHR)

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF)

Justice Human Rights Organization (JHRO)

Muslim Public Affairs Council

Saudi Organization for Rights & Freedoms (SAORF)