

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/saudi-arabia-seven-year-jail-term-for-saudi-23-07-2014,46692.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Saudi Arabia

Harsh sentence

Seven-year jail term for Saudi photographer

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Latest in a recent series of long jail terms for independent information providers

Reporters Without Borders condemns the seven-year jail term that a Jeddah criminal court specializing in national security and terrorism passed on independent news photographer **Jassim Mekki A'al Safar** on 18 June. He was also sentenced to a seven-year ban on foreign travel after his release.

Safar was accused of "*posting photos and videos on YouTube that could discredit the kingdom,*" "*posting photos of prisoners in public places,*" "*creating a terrorist cell,*" "*chanting anti-government slogans at protests*" and "*meeting with foreign reporters.*"

He was one of a total of 11 activists who [were given sentences](#) ranging from four to 19 years in prison on 18 June on charges that including sedition and "*demonstrating.*" The sentencing ending a trial that began on 26 November. Three of the years that made up Safar's seven-year term were imposed under the March 2007 cyber-crime law.

According to the Arabic Network For Human Rights Information, Safar told the judge during the trial that [he had been tortured](#) and mistreated since his arrest, but the judge rejected his claims.

"*As Safar was convicted and sentenced for providing information, we call for his immediate and unconditional release and the quashing for his conviction,*" said Reporters Without Borders assistant research director Virginie Dangles. "*We are extremely concerned to see so many Saudi news and information providers being convicted and given very severe sentences. This violates Saudi Arabia's international obligations.*"

Other recent victims of the crackdown include **Waleed Abu Al-Khair**, the founder of the Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia (MHRSA). A Riyadh court [sentenced him](#) on 6 July to 15 years in jail on charges of "*preparing, storing and transmitting information that undermines public order,*" "*inciting rebellion,*" "*publishing false information with the aim of harming the state,*" "*contempt of court*" and "*creating an NGO without permission*".

According to Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Khair has also been [the victim of mistreatment](#) since his arrest.

Well-known writer **Mukhlif Al-Shammari**'s five-year jail term was upheld on second appeal on 3 July. His [sentence](#) also includes a ban on writing for newspapers or websites or appearing in the media, and a ten-year ban on travelling abroad.

Fawzan Al-Harbi, one of the founders of the Arabian Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), which monitors human rights violations in Saudi Arabia, [was sentenced](#) on 25 June to seven years in prison and a seven-year ban on foreign travel. The charges on which he was convicted included "*preparing, storing and transmitting information that undermines public order*" under cyber-crime law.
