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<http://www.rsf.org/arabie-saoudite-long-jail-terms-for-two-more-saudi-08-07-2014,46603.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Saudi Arabia

Prison sentences

Long jail terms for two more Saudi human rights defenders

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Reporters Without Borders is stunned to learn that Waleed Abu Al-Khair, the founder of the Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia (MHRSA), and Mukhlif Al-Shammari, a human rights activist, have been sentenced in the past few days to 15 and five years in prison respectively for drawing attention to human right violations in Saudi Arabia

"These human rights defenders are paying a high price for their commitment to the fundamental freedom flouted by the Saudi regime," said Reporters Without Borders assistant research director Virginie Dangles.

"We demand their immediate release and that of all the other people who are being held just for expressing an opinion or disseminating information. The Saudi authorities must respect their international obligations."

[Arrested](#) on 15 April 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"*, [Khair was sentenced on 6 July](#).

As well as 15 years in jail, he was sentenced to a 15-year ban on foreign travel on completion of the jail term.

Human Rights Watch quoted the MHRSA as [saying](#) Khair did not recognize the court's legitimacy and did not intend to appeal.

Mukhlif Shammari's five-year jail term, originally passed by a Jeddah court specializing in national security and terrorism cases on 17 June 2013, was upheld on second appeal on 3 July. A well-known writer and activist, he was convicted in connection with the many articles he has written and, in particular, a video he posted on YouTube in which two girls described being mistreated.

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.

The confirmation of Shammari's [sentence](#) came just a week after **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 the March 2007 cyber-crime law.

As already reported, a Jeddah criminal court [sentenced](#) human rights defender and blogger **Raef Badawi** on appeal on 7 May to ten years in prison, 1,000 lashes, and a fine of 1 million riyals (200,000 euros) for insulting Islam.

Reporters Without Borders points out that on 9 December 1998, the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the ["Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms."](#)

This declaration recognizes the legitimacy of human rights activism as well as the need to protect human rights defenders and what they do.

Article 6 says: *"Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others to know, seek, obtain, receive and hold information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms"*.

Saudi Arabia is ranked 164th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#) is classified as one of the Reporters Without Borders "[Enemies of the Internet](#)."
