

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/arabie-saoudite-saudi-authorities-continue-12-11-2014,47221.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Saudi Arabia

Targeted arrests

## Saudi authorities continue witchhunt against netizens

12 November 2014

Two more cyber-activists are now behind bars including one who was given another jail term on 3 November, just two days before Raef Badawi, a blogger and human rights activist serving a 10-year jail term, was awarded the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Prize in Strasbourg.

**Mikhlif Al-Shammari**, a well-known writer and activist who has been the target of repeated judicial persecution, was [sentenced](#) on 3 November by a special criminal court in the eastern city of Al-Khobar to two years in prison and 200 lashes.

He was convicted and sentenced just two weeks after being summoned to the General Intelligence Directorate in Al-Khobar and ordered to close his Twitter account (@mikhlif) within 48 hours in connection with another complaint. He has 30 days to appeal the sentence.

**Suad Al-Shammari**, the first female lawyer [lawyer](#), activist and joint founder (with **Badawi**) of the now closed *Saudi Liberal Network* website, was [arrested](#) in Jeddah on 28 October after being questioned about some of her tweets, which were deemed to have [insulted](#) Islam and endangered public order. She is now in a [Jeddah prison](#).

*"We condemn the Saudi government's repressive policies towards dissidents who are increasingly using the Internet,"* Reporters Without Borders deputy programme director Virginie Dangles said.

*"We urge the authorities to reverse these decisions, to release all the netizens and human rights activists who are being denied their right to freedom of expression and information, and to abandon all judicial proceedings against them."*

The [Gulf Centre for Human Rights](#) said Mikhlif Al-Shammari was convicted for organizing an unauthorized dinner with dissidents after his release from prison in 2012, associating with Shiite clerics, agitating public opinion and reminding the public of the importance of coexistence between Sunnis and Shiites in Saudi Arabia.

In a letter to Saudi Arabia's human rights commission, he confirmed having sent a tweet calling for coexistence between Sunnis and Shiites and saying he was going to pray in the Shiite city of Sihat, and reiterated his [well-known](#) support for the country's Shiite minority, which has been calling for political and social reforms since 2011.

Mikhlif Al-Shammari has been harassed by the security services [since 2007](#) because of his activism and has been publicly criticized by his son in recent years. Several judicial cases have been brought against him in the past and he is currently the subject of two separate proceedings.

In June 2013, a Jeddah criminal court [sentenced](#) him to five years in prison and a ten-year ban on appearing in the media or writing for the media. He was convicted of trying to discredit the kingdom's reputation in the eyes of domestic and international public opinion, insulting the clergy and inciting divisions within the people in his many articles and in a video on YouTube.

This sentence was upheld by a Riyadh criminal court on 4 March and was confirmed by an appeal court in July.

He was [arrested](#) on 15 June 2010 in connection with his posts on the *Saudiyoona* and *Rasid* news websites criticizing political and religious officials, and was released in 2012 pending trial.

The tweets by Suad Al-Shammari that have caused [controversy](#) include one in 2013 in which she criticized the tenet that Muslim men should grow beards to distinguish themselves from infidels, and a more recent one that combined a photo of a man kissing a cleric's hand with [criticism](#) of clerical arrogance and pride.

Ranked 164th out of 180 countries in the [Press Freedom Index](#), Saudi Arabia is on the Reporters

Without Borders list of Enemies of the Internet, while King Abdallah Ibn Abdulaziz Al-Saud is on the list of Predators of Press Freedom.

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