

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE ARBITRARILY DETAINED BRITISH NATIONAL

Ahmed al-Doush's mental well-being has deteriorated significantly in prison in Saudi Arabia, where he is arbitrarily detained and serving five years in prison after an unfair trial for charges based on social media use which violate his right to free expression. Saudi authorities arrested British national Ahmed al-Doush, a senior business analyst with Bank of America, on 31 August 2024 at the airport in Riyadh as he was returning to the UK after visiting Saudi Arabia with his wife and children. The Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), sentenced him to 10 years in prison on 12 May 2025, shortened to eight years on appeal in June 2025, and then to five years in April 2026. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) recently concluded that his detention is arbitrary under international law and that he should be immediately released.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Walid bin Mohammad AISama'ani
Minister of Justice
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Postal Code 11472, P.O Box 7775
Email: 1950@moj.gov.sa

Your Excellency,

I am deeply concerned about the mental well-being of British national Ahmed al-Doush, who is arbitrarily detained and serving five years in prison after an unfair trial. Ahmed al-Doush was detained at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh on 31 August 2024 when he was travelling back home to the UK with his wife and their three children after a visit to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi authorities have not shared court documents, including the trial and appeal judgments, with his family. Ahmed al-Doush has informed his family that his detention relates to old social media activity and an alleged association with a Saudi critic in exile with whom he has no relationship beyond knowing his son. According to information shared by Saudi authorities with the UN WGAD on 2 May 2025, Ahmed al-Doush was accused of committing "terrorist crimes" and was charged under Article 34 and 43 of the Anti-Terrorism Crimes Law – the same provisions used in similar cases criminalizing expression on social media. The Working Group said it was "satisfied with the evidence that Mr. al-Doush's detention arose due to his social media posts and his perceived association with a known critic of the Government of Saudi Arabia and that they form the bases for his arrest and continued detention".

Ahmed al-Doush has only been allowed restricted phone communication with his family. He told his wife in April 2025 that he was instructed by prison authorities to only check in with her and the children during the calls, and that if he discussed anything about his conditions of detention, health or legal proceedings and charges against him, that the call would be terminated and there would be punishment. His family reported that he was recently denied contact with them for almost three weeks because he spoke to his children in English.

*The SCC has routinely used vague provisions under the anti-cybercrime and counter-terror laws equating peaceful expression with "terrorism". Amnesty International has documented the Saudi authorities' increasing crackdown on freedom of expression, targeting both citizens and foreign nationals, many of whom have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. **The Saudi authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Ahmed al-Doush. Until then, they must prevent further violations of his fair trial rights and ensure he has regular access to his family and legal representation.***

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmed al-Doush is currently held in al-Hair Prison in the capital Riyadh. As a result of restrictions by prison authorities on what he can share with his wife during his phone calls with her, she has not received detailed information about his court proceedings, including evidence against him or the charge sheet, trial judgment or appeal judgment, nor updates on prison conditions or his health.

Ahmed al-Doush's family and his lawyer in the United Kingdom have not received information on his charges or the basis of his conviction. Ahmed al-Doush's charges appear to be expression-related. Ahmed al-Doush was subjected to extensive interrogation without a lawyer present, where he reported being forced to sign a statement, before being informed of the charges against him. During interrogations, he said to his family that he was told that if not for his social media activity, he would be home with his family. Notably, his X account has only 37 followers and a total of four posts. In his first hearing in late January 2025, after nearly five months of being denied access to a court, the judge told him that charges would be issued for using social media to spread fake, untrue and damaging news against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and that he was accused of having a relationship with an individual who threatened the Kingdom's national security.

Ahmed al-Doush had multiple trial hearings. He was assigned a court-appointed lawyer at his first hearing on 27 January 2025, nearly five months after his arrest and after repeated interrogations, but he is not permitted regular communication with him. The SCC sentenced Ahmed al-Doush to 10 years in prison on 12 May 2025. The sentence was reduced to eight years in prison at an appeal hearing on 23 June 2025. Ahmed al-Doush was summoned without notice to the appeal hearing where the judge and his lawyer in Saudi Arabia were present. The judge informed him that his conviction was confirmed and that his sentence was reduced from 10 years to 8 years. Another hearing was held in October 2025 where an appeal decision was reportedly made, but detailed information has not been made available to his family or UK lawyer. A final decision in April 2026 concluded the domestic proceedings, confirming his conviction and finalizing his sentence at 5 years imprisonment.

In a submission to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on 2 May 2025, the Saudi government, according to WGAD, "asserts that there was evidence proving that Mr. al-Doush had committed terrorist crimes, including his support for terrorist ideology, his meeting with supporters and followers of terrorist ideology, his use of the information network to commit terrorist crimes and promote terrorist ideology, punishable under articles 34 and 43 of the Anti-Terrorism Crimes and Financing Law". In a decision dated 2 March 2026, the WGAD found that the Saudi Government "has not provided detailed or substantiated information" as to how Mr. al-Doush's expressions and association were a threat requiring detention, and found "the deprivation of liberty of Ahmed Ali al-Doush, being in contravention of articles 9, 10, 11, 18, 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is arbitrary and falls within categories I, II and III".

For two and a half months after his arrest on 31 August 2024, Ahmed al-Doush's family was denied any communication with him. They were also not given information about his situation or the reason for his arrest. His wife and children were left in the dark about his well-being, his location of detention, the reasons for his detention, his conditions of detention and whether and when he might be allowed to return home. He was also denied consular access to UK government representatives during this time, severely hindering the UK government and his family's ability to gather information about him, his detention, and steps they might take to facilitate his release. It wasn't until 17 November 2024 that Ahmed al-Doush was allowed a call to his wife. He was then permitted weekly phone calls with his family. However, since January 2025, these calls were interrupted and have now become sporadic. He later told his family that his communication with them was restricted by the authorities as punishment for asking his wife during a call about people that had recently been released in Saudi Arabia.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English and Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 October 2026

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Ahmed al-Doush (He/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/0102/2025/en/>