

**King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

Brussels, 18 March 2014

Re: Concerns regarding the sentencing of human rights lawyer Waleed Abu Al-Khair

Your Majesty,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further twelve European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE previously wrote to you on 23 October 2013 to express its serious concern over the situation of Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair, a prominent human rights defender and lawyer and founder of "Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia" who has been actively engaged in the defence of activists jailed without charges and of women banned from voting in Saudi Arabia. Over the past several years Mr Al-Khair has been the target of multiple hostile acts and most recently, on 2 October 2013, he was arrested in Jeddah on charges of "organising illegal gatherings" in his house. Following his arrest on 3 October 2013, Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair was reportedly questioned by the Jeddah Public Prosecutor and released on bail.

The CCBE has recently been informed that in October 2013 the Criminal Court in Jeddah handed down a three-month sentence of imprisonment against Mr Al-Khair, related to a petition that he, and 64 others, signed concerning the trial of Jeddah reformists and the December 2011 events in Qatif. According to the information that we have received, on 24 February 2014 the Court of Appeal in Mecca upheld the three-month prison sentence against Mr Al-Khair.

The CCBE believes that the upholding of the sentence of Mr Al-Khair is solely related to his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities and exercise of his profession as a lawyer. The CCBE recalls the fundamental right for all persons to hold opinions and to freely and peacefully express them.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to

consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take immediate and effective steps to immediately and unconditionally release Mr Al-Khair and, in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice, guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Saudi-Arabia are able to conduct their professional duties without fear of reprisal and free of all restrictions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aldo Bulgarelli', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Aldo BULGARELLI
President