

**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, 5 May 2014

Re: Concerns regarding the detention Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair, a human rights lawyer

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 and 18 March 2014 to express its serious concern over the situation of Mr Waleed Abu Al-Khair, a prominent human rights lawyer and founder of "Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia". Over the past several years Mr Al-Khair has been the target of multiple hostile acts and on 24 February 2014 the Court of Appeal in Mecca upheld a three-month prison sentence 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 received at that time, Mr Al-Khair was still waiting to be informed of when the sentence would be carried out.

The CCBE has recently been informed that Mr Al-Khair was arbitrarily detained on 15 April 2014 while he was attending the fifth session of an ongoing trial against him at the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh. This detention appears to be unrelated to his previous convictions and charges. The CCBE has also received reports that Mr Al-Khair is being subjected to torture and ill-treatment while in detention at Al Hair prison. According to our information, Mr Al-Khair is being held in solitary confinement where he is being exposed to bright lights in order to deprive him of sleep. In addition, he has also been denied access to his lawyer and family. The CCBE believes that the detention of Mr Al-Khair is solely related to his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities and exercise of his profession as a lawyer.

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.

Moreover Article 17 states that:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges your Majesty to take effective steps to immediately and unconditionally release Mr Al-Khair and guarantee his physical and psychological safety and integrity. The CCBE also asks you to ensure that human rights lawyers in Saudi Arabia are able to conduct their professional duties under all circumstances without fear of reprisal and free from all restrictions.

Yours sincerely,

Aldo BULGARELLI
President