

Saudi Arabia – The GCHR calls for the immediate release of human rights defender Mr Mohammed Al-Bajady

<http://gc4hr.org/news/view/282>

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The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) is calling for the immediate release of human rights defender Mr **Mohammed Al-Bajady**, co-founder of the Saudi Civil & Political Rights Association (HSM), and former host of a weekly on-line forum called “The citizen and his rights”.

The GCHR has received information that Mohammed Al-Bajady’s health is rapidly deteriorating and that he is close to death. The GCHR calls for the immediate intervention by the Saudi authorities to ensure that this peaceful human rights activist is not allowed to die while in detention.

On 19 September 2012 Mohammed Al-Bajady last spoke to his wife by telephone. During the conversation he informed her that he was going to start a hunger strike as soon as he finished the phone call. It is reported that since then he was transferred to solitary confinement in Al- Ha’ir prison and has not been allowed to make any calls. The GCHR has received reports that he is now being fed intravenously.

This is the third time that Mohammed Al-Bajady has gone on hunger strike since 21 March 2011 when he was arrested at his home in Buraidah, Al-Qassim province by security forces. He has been subjected to ill-treatment while in detention and on one occasion was subject to solitary confinement for four months. (For further information please see GCHR issued on his case 10 April 2011 <http://gc4hr.org/news/view/116>.)

"Mohammed Al-Bajady shouldn't be imprisoned for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly." said Khalid Ibrahim Acting Director of GCHR and added "I call on the Saudi King to immediately release him and do everything in his power to protect and support the legitimate work of human rights defenders and also to meet all legal obligations under international law."

The GCHR is extremely concerned for the physical and psychological integrity of defender Mohammed Al-Bajady and fears that he is close to death. The GCHR believes that his arrest and continued detention are directly related to his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights in Saudi Arabia.

The GCHR urges the authorities in Saudi Arabia to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender Mohammed Al-Bajady;
2. Grant Mohammed Al-Bajady immediate and unfettered access to the medical treatment which he requires;
3. Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Mohammed Al-Bajady;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

The GCHR respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 5 (b) which states that: *"For the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels: (b) To form, join and participate in non-governmental organizations, associations or groups;"* Article 6 (c) *"Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters"* and to Article 12.2, which provides that *"the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration"*.