

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to urge you to personally seek the immediate and unconditional release of our constituent and U.S. citizen Mr. Salah Al-Haidar and to raise his case with the highest levels of the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi officials detained Mr. Al-Haidar, a writer and journalist from northern Virginia, in April 2019 on baseless grounds. He was arrested just one week after his mother, prominent women's rights activist Ms. Aziza Al-Yousef, was provisionally released from prison after also being detained on false charges. We believe this is a targeted effort against the family for their advocacy of social reforms.

On October 1st, Mr. Al-Haidar is scheduled to appear in Specialized Criminal Court — a court specifically established to try individuals suspected of terrorism — for allegedly using social media to criticize the Saudi Arabian government. He faces charges that carry a sentence between 8 and 33 years. To date, the Saudi government has not allowed Mr. Al-Haidar to communicate with his attorneys to prepare his defense. We understand that the Specialized Criminal Court conducts trials in secret and does not allow defendants access to legal representation, thus denying them their right to due process. As such, it is critical that the U.S. Embassy attend and observe Mr. Al-Haidar's trial to ensure transparency.

There are reports that Saudi authorities have subjected Mr. Al-Haidar, along with U.S. citizen Mr. Badr Al-Ibrahim and eleven others who were detained on the same day, to torture and other inhumane and degrading treatment, including months-long solitary confinement. Saudi authorities have also denied Mr. Al-Haidar contact with his family to include his wife and children.

We also remain concerned about the aforementioned case of Ms. Aziza Al-Yousef, who is a U.S. Lawful Permanent Resident and a resident of Virginia. The Saudi government arrested Ms. Al-Yousef in May 2018 on charges related to her human rights activism and provisionally released her in March 2019. Ms. Al-Yousef cannot leave Saudi Arabia given the charges pending in court, and she is at risk for retaliation by the Saudi government as long as she remains in Saudi Arabia. We therefore seek your intervention to press Saudi officials to lift the travel ban on Ms. Al-Yousef so that she can return home to her family in Virginia.

The reports of egregious violations of human rights in Saudi Arabia are growing. It is clear that after facing no consequences for the gruesome assassination of Virginia resident Jamal Khashoggi in 2018, the regime continues to act with impunity. We cannot stand for Saudi Arabia's campaign against those who bravely speak out for human rights and basic freedoms, especially if those individuals are U.S. citizens and lawful residents. It is our duty to protect the safety and security of all Americans here and

abroad. We urge you to secure the unconditional and immediate release of Mr. Al-Haidar and facilitate his and Ms. Al-Yousef's return to the United States. We also urge you to do the same for all other U.S. citizens being held in Saudi prisons over allegations relating to peaceful dissent.

As you work toward obtaining Mr. Al-Haidar's release, we request that you take the following interim measures:

1. Call on Saudi authorities to allow Mr. Al-Haidar communication and personal access to his family and attorneys.
2. Ensure that the U.S. Embassy attends all trial proceedings for Mr. Salah Al-Haidar.

And for Ms. Al-Yousef and all others:

3. Call on Saudi authorities to drop all charges pending against Ms. Aziza Al-Yousef and to provide for her immediate return to the United States.
4. Call on Saudi authorities to release all other U.S. citizens in unjust detention for activities related to peaceful dissent and to provide for their immediate return to the United States.
5. Call for the unconditional and immediate release of all prisoners of conscience in Saudi Arabia and the protection of human rights and freedom of expression in Saudi Arabia.

Thank you for your immediate attention to these urgent human rights cases.

Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

cc:

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo
U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia John P. Abizaid
HRH Ambassador Reema Bint Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
Saudi Human Rights Commission President Dr. Awwad Al-awwad