

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

ABDULAZIZ AL-SHUBAILI

عبد العزيز الشبيلي

At liberty **Saudi Arabia**

Abdulaziz Al-Shubaili is a lawyer and founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association who defended fellow activists in court and called for reform online. He served an eight-year prison sentence for his work and was conditionally released in July 2025.

HuMENA.

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Case reference HM-SA-2017-001

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Abdulaziz Al-Shubaili is a lawyer and founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association who defended fellow activists in court and called for reform online. He served an eight-year prison sentence for his work and was conditionally released in July 2025.

STATUS	**At liberty**
ARRESTED	**17 Sep 2017**
COUNTRY	**Saudi Arabia**
SENTENCE	**Eight years in prison, followed by an eight-year ban on writing on social media and an eight-year travel ban.**
CHARGES	**Publishing a statement calling for demonstrations** **Accusing judges of dishonesty and human rights violations** **Preparing, storing, and sending data affecting public order** **Communicating with foreign organisations** **Participating in an unlicensed association (ACPRA)**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Abdulaziz Al-Shubaili and on any family members affected by the same order.

02 Restore valid travel documents and remove any border-watch flags placed in connection with peaceful human rights work.

03 Comply with the ICCPR Article 12 guarantee of freedom of movement.

Latest updates on this case
Scan the code or visit:
https://humena.org/defenders/abdulaziz-al-shubaili/

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Inhumane detention conditions	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)
Judicial harassment	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12
Threats and intimidation	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Travel ban	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12
Unfair trial	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

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HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

18 November 2013

SUMMONS

First summons by prosecution

Al-Shubaili was summoned by the Interrogation and Prosecution Department in Al Qassim, the first of four summonses he would receive over the following month.

17 December 2013

SUMMONS

Fourth summons by prosecution

Al-Shubaili was summoned for the fourth time by the Interrogation and Prosecution Department in Al Qassim, concluding a month-long pattern of official intimidation.

July 2014

CHARGE FILED

Formally charged

Al-Shubaili was formally informed of the charges against him, including incitement to demonstrate, and tried before the Specialised Criminal Court.

March 2015

CHARGE FILED

New charge over contact with foreign organisations

A new charge of communicating with foreign organisations was added, linked to his cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms.

29 May 2016

CONVICTION

Sentenced to eight years

The Specialised Criminal Court sentenced Al-Shubaili to eight years in prison, plus an eight-year social media ban and an eight-year travel ban. He was not detained immediately.

15 May 2017

FINAL JUDGMENT

Sentence upheld on appeal and made final

The Specialised Criminal Court of Appeal in Riyadh upheld the full sentence against Al-Shubaili, including the travel ban and the writing ban. He was informed of the decision on 31 July 2017.

17 September 2017	ARREST	**Arrested in Al Qassim** Security forces arrested Al-Shubaili in Al Qassim province and transferred him to Onayza Prison.
2019	SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IMPOSED	**Held in filthy cell for two months** Al-Shubaili was confined to a filthy cell without access to fresh air or sunlight for two months, amounting to punitive solitary confinement.
16 May 2019	CONTEXT	**Joins a five-day hunger strike over prison conditions** Al-Shubaili and other prisoners held a five-day hunger strike over their conditions and ended it when officials promised to address their demands.
7 November 2019	TRANSFER BETWEEN PLACES OF DETENTION	**Moved to the high-security prison in Buraidah** Al-Shubaili was transferred from Onayza prison to the high-security prison in Buraidah.
21 November 2019	CONTEXT	**UN Working Group finds his detention arbitrary** The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, in Opinion 71/2019, found his detention arbitrary and called for his release.
30 September 2020	CONTEXT	**Named in UN report on reprisals** He was named in the UN Secretary-General's annual report on reprisals against people who cooperate with the UN.
13 July 2025	CONDITIONAL RELEASE	**Conditionally released after serving his eight-year sentence** Al-Shubaili was conditionally released on 13 July 2025 after serving his eight-year prison sentence.
13 July 2025	TRAVEL BAN IMPOSED	**Eight-year travel ban and social media ban on release** On release, the eight-year travel ban imposed with his sentence took effect, together with a ban on using social media.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Abdulaziz Al-Shubaili, born in 1985, is a Saudi lawyer and a principal member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association, known by its Arabic acronym ACPRA. The association was established in 2009 to monitor and document human rights violations in Saudi Arabia and to advocate for constitutional reform, an independent judiciary, and respect for civil and political rights.

Al-Shubaili participated in the legal defence of several ACPRA colleagues who were prosecuted for their work. He used platforms including Twitter to call for reform, criticise judicial practices, and speak publicly about rights and freedoms. His advocacy made him a target of sustained official scrutiny.

Harassment and Arrest

Between November and December 2013, Al-Shubaili was summoned four times by the Interrogation and Prosecution Department in Al Qassim province. Each summons was an act of intimidation, signalling that the state was preparing a case against him.

On 29 May 2016, the Specialised Criminal Court in Riyadh sentenced him to eight years in prison. The court also imposed an eight-year ban on writing on social media, to begin immediately, and an eight-year travel ban to commence after his release. Despite the sentence, authorities did not detain him at that time.

On 17 September 2017, security forces arrested Al-Shubaili in Al Qassim province. He was taken to Onayza Prison and in November 2019 transferred to the high-security prison in Buraidah. He was conditionally released on 13 July 2025.

Charges and Legal Proceedings

The charges against Al-Shubaili included publishing a statement calling for demonstrations, accusing judges of dishonesty and human rights violations, preparing and transmitting data deemed harmful to public order, communicating with foreign organisations, and participating in an unlicensed association, ACPRA.

In 2017 the Specialised Criminal Court of Appeal in Riyadh upheld the full sentence issued in May 2016; he was informed of the decision on 31 July 2017. The appeals process offered no substantive review of the evidence or the charges, both of which are rooted in the exercise of rights protected under international law.

Detention Conditions

Al-Shubaili has been subjected to punitive treatment during his imprisonment. In 2019, he was placed in

a filthy cell for two months and denied access to fresh air and sunlight. The conditions amounted to a form of solitary confinement designed to cause psychological and physical harm.

In May 2019 he joined other prisoners in a five-day hunger strike over their conditions. On 7 November 2019 he was moved from Onayza to the high-security prison in Buraidah. In November 2019 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found his detention arbitrary.

Context and Pattern

Al-Shubaili's prosecution is part of a broader campaign to dismantle ACPRA. Saudi authorities arrested and imprisoned nearly all of the organisation's founding members, including Dr. Mohammed Al-Qahtani, Dr. Abdullah Al-Hamid, and Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Hamid, among others. The organisation was formally dissolved by the state, and its members sentenced to lengthy prison terms on charges that criminalise peaceful advocacy.

The Saudi government has used the Specialised Criminal Court, originally established to try terrorism cases, to prosecute human rights defenders, lawyers, and writers. Trials in this court routinely fail to meet international fair trial standards, and sentences are used to silence dissent and deter others from speaking out.

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SAMPLE LETTER

Copy it, adapt it and send it from your own address.

Your Excellency,

I am writing to demand the immediate lifting of the arbitrary travel ban imposed on Abdulaziz Al-Shubaili, lawyer; founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA); defender of civil and political rights in Saudi Arabia.

In brief: Abdulaziz Al-Shubaili is a lawyer and founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association who defended fellow activists in court and called for reform online. He served an eight-year prison sentence for his work and was conditionally released in July 2025.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Immediately lift the travel ban imposed on Abdulaziz Al-Shubaili and on any family members affected by the same order;
2. Restore valid travel documents and remove any border-watch flags placed in connection with peaceful human rights work;
3. Comply with the ICCPR Article 12 guarantee of freedom of movement.

I will continue to monitor this case until Abdulaziz Al-Shubaili's freedom of movement is restored.

Respectfully,

[Your name]
[Your city, country]
8 November 2026