ADVOCACY DOSSIER

MOHAMMED NASSER AL-GHAMDI

محمد بن ناصر الغامدي

Imprisoned (serving sentence) **Saudi Arabia**

Mohammed Nasser Al-Ghamdi is a retired teacher in Saudi Arabia whose brother is a dissident scholar in UK exile. Arrested in 2022 for social media posts, he was sentenced to death then 30 years in prison.

HuMENA.

Prepared by HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement · 8 November 2026

Case reference HM-SA-2022-001

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THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Mohammed Nasser Al-Ghamdi is a retired teacher in Saudi Arabia whose brother is a dissident scholar in UK exile. Arrested in 2022 for social media posts, he was sentenced to death then 30 years in prison.

STATUS	**Imprisoned (serving sentence)**
ARRESTED	**11 Jun 2022**
COUNTRY	**Saudi Arabia**
SENTENCE	**Thirty years in prison (imposed in September 2024 after the August 2024 appeal ruling quashed his death sentence).**
CHARGES	**Renouncing allegiance to the guardians of the state** **Supporting a terrorist ideology and a terrorist entity (Muslim Brotherhood)** **Using social media to follow and promote individuals who seek to destabilize public order** **Sympathizing with individuals detained on terrorism-related charges**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Release Mohammed Al-Ghamdi immediately and unconditionally.

02 Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

04 Provide Mohammed Al-Ghamdi with immediate, independent medical evaluation and the full treatment that condition requires, including transfer to an independent civilian hospital if necessary.

05 Immediately end all harassment, summons, surveillance, and threats against the family of Mohammed Al-Ghamdi in Saudi Arabia.

06 Immediately end all transnational targeting of Mohammed Al-Ghamdi, including surveillance, defamation campaigns, Interpol misuse, and consular harassment.

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

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DOCUMENTED VIOLATIONS

	INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
Arbitrary detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9
Denial of legal counsel	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14(3)
Denial of medical care	UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rules 24 to 27
Enforced disappearance	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9, 16
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
Prolonged pretrial detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)
Reprisal against relatives	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Transnational repression	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Unfair trial	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

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HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

11 June 2022

ARREST

Arrested outside his home in Mecca

Saudi state security forces arrested Mohammed bin Nasser al-Ghamdi without a warrant outside his home in Mecca. He was then held in solitary confinement without contact with his family or a lawyer for about four months.

October 2022

IMPROVEMENT IN TREATMENT

End of incommunicado detention

After about four months in solitary confinement in al-Dhahban prison without family contact or legal counsel, Al-Ghamdi was allowed limited access to a lawyer just before court sessions. He was later moved to al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh.

July 2023

CONVICTION

Death sentence by SCC

The Specialised Criminal Court in Riyadh sentenced Al-Ghamdi to death under articles 30, 34, 43, and 44 of Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism law, citing crimes that 'targeted the status of the King and the Crown Prince.'

March 2024

UN OPINION OR DECISION

UN Working Group finds his detention arbitrary

In Opinion No. 10/2024, adopted at its 99th session, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found his detention arbitrary and called for his release.

August 2024

APPEAL OUTCOME

Appeal court quashes death sentence

The appeal chamber of the Specialised Criminal Court quashed the death sentence and sent the case back for a new ruling.

24 September 2024

CONVICTION

Resentenced to 30 years in prison

After the death sentence was quashed, the court sentenced him on the same charges to thirty years in prison. He remains held in al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh, where he has been denied the medication he needs for pre-existing health conditions.

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THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Mohammed Nasser Al-Ghamdi was born in 1968 and worked as a teacher before retiring. He used social media platforms, primarily Twitter and YouTube, to discuss issues of public concern, including corruption and human rights violations within the Kingdom. His posts also expressed support for prominent religious scholars who had been detained by Saudi authorities.

Al-Ghamdi's engagement online was consistent with a broader pattern of quiet dissent among teachers, clerics, and other citizens whose criticism did not rise to the level of formal political organizing but who nonetheless used digital platforms to comment on state policies and practices.

The Family Dimension

Mohammed Al-Ghamdi's brother, Saeed bin Nasser al-Ghamdi, is a well-known Islamic scholar and vocal critic of the Saudi government who has lived in exile in the United Kingdom for years. Another brother, Assad Al-Ghamdi, was sentenced to twenty years in prison in Saudi Arabia, reduced to fifteen years on appeal. Saeed has publicly stated his belief that the harsh sentences handed to Mohammed and Assad are acts of retaliation for his own outspoken opposition to human rights violations in the Kingdom.

The targeting of family members of critics abroad is a documented tactic of transnational repression employed by the Saudi state. Relatives remaining in the Kingdom are arrested, prosecuted, or subjected to travel bans and asset freezes in order to pressure exiled dissidents into silence or return. Mohammed Al-Ghamdi's case fits this pattern: a teacher detained, tried under counterterrorism law, and sentenced to decades in prison for posts that mentioned his brother's cause and echoed his brother's concerns.

Arrest and Enforced Disappearance

Al-Ghamdi was arrested outside his home in Mecca on 11 June 2022. For the first four months of his detention, he was held in solitary confinement and was subjected to what amounted to enforced disappearance. His family was unable to contact him, and he was denied access to legal counsel. The isolation served both to disorient the detainee and to prevent any outside scrutiny of his treatment during the initial interrogation period.

Once legal representation was finally permitted, Al-Ghamdi was allowed to meet with his lawyer only in the minutes immediately before court hearings. This severely constrained his ability to prepare a defence or to communicate the conditions of his detention.

Detention Conditions and Medical Neglect

Al-Ghamdi has pre-existing health conditions that require ongoing treatment with prescription medications. Since his arrest, the Saudi authorities have refused to provide these medications. His health has deteriorated significantly as a result of this medical neglect.

He was first held in al-Dhahban prison and remains detained in Al-Ha'ir Prison in Riyadh, a facility known for harsh conditions and the detention of political prisoners and individuals convicted under the Kingdom's broad counterterrorism laws.

Legal Proceedings

The case was heard by the Specialised Criminal Court (SCC) in Riyadh, a tribunal established ostensibly for terrorism-related offences but widely used to prosecute peaceful dissent. Al-Ghamdi was charged under articles 30, 34, 43, and 44 of Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism law. The charges included "renouncing allegiance to the guardians of the state"; "supporting a terrorist ideology and a terrorist entity," specifically naming the Muslim Brotherhood; "using his accounts on Twitter and YouTube to follow and promote individuals who seek to destabilize public order"; and "sympathizing with individuals detained on terrorism-related charges."

On 10 July 2023, the SCC sentenced Al-Ghamdi to death. The court's reasoning was explicit: the crimes "targeted the status of the King and the Crown Prince," and the "magnitude of his actions is amplified by the fact they occurred through a global media platform, necessitating a strict punishment." The public prosecutor had requested the maximum penalties for all charges.

In August 2024 the SCC appeal chamber quashed the death sentence and sent the case back. In September 2024 he was sentenced on the same charges to thirty years in prison. Al-Ghamdi is now expected to serve three decades behind bars for social media activity that consisted of commentary and expressions of solidarity.

International and Regional Context

Mohammed Al-Ghamdi's case is one among hundreds of similar prosecutions in Saudi Arabia since 2017, when Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman consolidated power and intensified a crackdown on dissent. Teachers, clerics, academics, writers, women's rights activists, and others have been arrested and sentenced to decades in prison under the Kingdom's counterterrorism and cybercrime laws for peaceful expression online.

The SCC has become the primary instrument for these prosecutions. Its proceedings lack basic fair-trial guarantees, including the right to effective legal representation, the right to a public hearing, and protections against the use of coerced confessions. Sentences have grown progressively harsher: what once might have resulted in a few years' imprisonment now routinely produces terms of twenty, thirty, or even fifty years, effectively life sentences for many defendants.

Al-Ghamdi's case also underscores the transnational dimension of Saudi repression. By imprisoning the

brothers of an exiled critic, the state sends a clear message to dissidents abroad: your family will suffer for your speech. This tactic has been applied systematically to the relatives of activists, clerics, and scholars who have sought refuge in Europe and North America.

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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 release of Mohammed Al-Ghamdi, retired teacher; posted online about corruption and human rights violations; expressed support for detained religious scholars, currently detained in Saudi Arabia since 11 June 2022, and an end to all reprisals tied to this case.

Saudi Arabia detained and prosecuted Mohammed Al-Ghamdi in apparent retaliation for his brother Saeed's activism abroad. Saeed, an exiled Islamic scholar and government critic in the UK, believes the harsh sentences against Mohammed and another brother are designed to punish the family and silence his dissent.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Release Mohammed Al-Ghamdi immediately and unconditionally;
2. Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights;
3. Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention;
4. Provide Mohammed Al-Ghamdi with immediate, independent medical evaluation and the full treatment that condition requires, including transfer to an independent civilian hospital if necessary;
5. Immediately end all harassment, summons, surveillance, and threats against the family of Mohammed Al-Ghamdi in Saudi Arabia;
6. Immediately end all transnational targeting of Mohammed Al-Ghamdi, including surveillance, defamation campaigns, Interpol misuse, and consular harassment.

I will continue to monitor this case until Mohammed Al-Ghamdi is free.

Respectfully,

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