

ADVOCACY DOSSIER

SAUD AL-FARAJ

سعود الفرج

Killed **Saudi Arabia**

Saud al-Faraj was executed in April 2026 after a trial at Saudi Arabia's Specialised Criminal Court that followed nearly two years of enforced disappearance and a coerced confession extracted under torture.

HuMENA.

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

Case reference HM-SA-2026-038

01

THE CASE AT A GLANCE

Saud al-Faraj was executed in April 2026 after a trial at Saudi Arabia's Specialised Criminal Court that followed nearly two years of enforced disappearance and a coerced confession extracted under torture.

STATUS	**Killed**
ARRESTED	**2 Dec 2019**
COUNTRY	**Saudi Arabia**
SENTENCE	**Death penalty, carried out on 1 April 2026.**
CHARGES	**Participation in peaceful protests for Shi'a minority rights in 2011 and 2012, the conduct cited against him** **Authorities' accusations, based on a confession extracted under torture: joining a foreign terrorist organisation, forming a terrorist cell and killing security personnel**

WE CALL ON THE AUTHORITIES TO:

WHAT WE ASK

01 Order a full, independent, and impartial investigation into the killing of Saud al-Faraj, with timely public reporting on findings.

02 Identify and prosecute those responsible, both the direct perpetrators and any state officials who ordered, enabled, or covered up the killing.

03 Provide effective reparation to the family of Saud al-Faraj.

04 Take immediate steps to protect other defenders working in the same field from similar attacks.

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

02

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)
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)
Prolonged pretrial detention	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3)
Reprisal against relatives	UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Article 12
Torture	Convention against Torture, Articles 1, 2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7
Unfair trial	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14

03

HOW THE CASE UNFOLDED

2011

DEFENDER ACTIVITY

Participates in peaceful protests

Al-Faraj takes part in demonstrations in the Eastern Province calling for better treatment of Saudi Arabia's Shi'a minority.

November 2019

PRESSURE TO STOP WORK OR TO INFORM

Refuses intelligence mission

A lieutenant colonel from the Mabahith phones al-Faraj and asks him to carry out an intelligence mission. Al-Faraj refuses and is threatened.

November 2019

OTHER ACT

Security forces raid his company warehouse

About two weeks after he refused the intelligence mission, security forces raided his company warehouse and seized equipment.

December 2019

CONTEXT

Forces fire at the family home during a night raid

While searching for him, security forces raided his neighbourhood at night and fired machine guns at his family's house.

2 December 2019

ARREST

Arrested and held incommunicado

Al-Faraj is arrested in a violent raid and taken to the General Prison in Dammam, where he is placed in solitary confinement.

7 December 2020

COMPLAINT FILED BY THE PERSON

Files torture complaint with the Public Prosecution

He filed a torture complaint with the Public Prosecution; further complaints followed on 24 August and 20 December 2021, with no response.

June 2021

REAPPEARANCE IN CUSTODY

First appearance before judge

After about nineteen months in enforced disappearance, al-Faraj is brought before a judge and prosecutor and informed of the charges against him for the first time.

8 August 2021

IMPROVEMENT IN TREATMENT

First family contact in two years

Al-Faraj has his first contact with his family since his arrest in December 2019.

2 November 2022

CONVICTION

Sentenced to death

The Specialised Criminal Court sentences al-Faraj to death based on charges related to his participation in peaceful protests and a confession obtained under torture.

31 January 2023

APPEAL: JUDGMENT UPHELD

Appeal rejected

The Specialised Criminal Court of Appeal upholds the death sentence.

15 March 2023

HEARING

Supreme Court appeal filed

Al-Faraj's lawyer files an appeal to the Supreme Court.

18 December 2023

PETITION TO THE WORKING GROUP ON ARBITRARY DETENTION

UN Working Group petition submitted

MENA Rights Group and the European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights submit a request for opinion to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

27 March 2024

UN OPINION OR DECISION

UN finds detention arbitrary

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention adopts Opinion No. 26/2024, finding al-Faraj's detention arbitrary and calling for his immediate release.

5 March 2025

CONVICTION

Retried and sentenced to death again

The Specialised Criminal Court retried him and sentenced him to death again.

1 April 2026

EXECUTION

Executed

Saudi authorities execute Saud al-Faraj in the Eastern Province.

04

THE FULL STORY

Background and Work

Saud al-Faraj worked as a businessman in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, home to a large portion of the country's Shi'a Muslim minority. During 2011 and 2012, he took part in peaceful demonstrations protesting discrimination and calling for improved treatment of Shi'a communities. The protests were part of a broader wave of civic mobilisation across the region during the Arab Spring period, with demonstrators in the Eastern Province demanding political reform, the release of detained Shi'a clerics, and an end to systemic marginalization.

Al-Faraj's participation in the protests was peaceful. After the demonstrations subsided, he returned to his business and private life. For years there was no official indication that his involvement would be used against him.

The Approach and Arrest

In November 2019, a lieutenant colonel from the Mabahith, Saudi Arabia's General Directorate of Investigation, responsible for internal security and counter-intelligence, phoned al-Faraj and asked him to carry out an intelligence mission. Al-Faraj refused and was threatened. About two weeks later, security forces raided his company warehouse and seized equipment. Within weeks, on 2 December 2019, he was arrested in a brutal raid and taken directly to the General Prison in Dammam, where he was placed in solitary confinement.

His family received no information about his whereabouts or the reasons for his detention. Al-Faraj was held incommunicado, with no access to legal counsel and no opportunity to challenge his detention. He disappeared into the prison system for nearly two years.

Enforced Disappearance and Torture

Al-Faraj remained in enforced disappearance until the end of June 2021, when he was finally brought before a judge and prosecutor. It was the first time he was formally informed of the charges against him. The delay, about nineteen months without judicial oversight, violated basic due process standards under international human rights law.

During his detention, al-Faraj was subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Authorities coerced him into signing a confession. It was not until August 2021 that he had his first contact with his family since the arrest, nearly two years after he was taken.

Trial and Sentencing

On 2 November 2022, the Specialised Criminal Court, a tribunal established to prosecute terrorism-related offences but frequently used against human rights defenders, peaceful dissidents, and members

of Saudi Arabia's Shi'a minority, sentenced al-Faraj to death. The charges stemmed from his participation in the 2011 to 2012 protests and were based on the confession extracted under torture.

On 31 January 2023, the Specialised Criminal Court of Appeal upheld the death sentence. On 15 March 2023, his lawyer appealed to the Supreme Court. On 5 March 2025, he was retried by the Specialised Criminal Court and sentenced to death again. The Interior Ministry said the Supreme Court had upheld the conviction before the execution.

International Response and Execution

In December 2023, MENA Rights Group submitted al-Faraj's case to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. On 27 March 2024, the Working Group adopted Opinion No. 26/2024, finding that al-Faraj's detention was arbitrary and in violation of Articles 9, 10, and 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Working Group called for his immediate release and for reparations.

Saudi authorities ignored the decision. On 1 April 2026, Saud al-Faraj was executed in the Eastern Province. His execution followed a pattern of repression against Shi'a activists and peaceful demonstrators in the Eastern Province, many of whom have been sentenced to death after grossly unfair trials in the Specialised Criminal Court.

05

SAMPLE LETTER

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

Your Excellency,

I am writing to demand a full, independent, and transparent investigation into the killing of Saud al-Faraj, businessman from the Eastern Province who participated in peaceful protests for Shi'a minority rights in Saudi Arabia.

In brief: Saud al-Faraj was executed in April 2026 after a trial at Saudi Arabia's Specialised Criminal Court that followed nearly two years of enforced disappearance and a coerced confession extracted under torture.

I respectfully urge your authorities to:
1. Order a full, independent, and impartial investigation into the killing of Saud al-Faraj, with timely public reporting on findings;
2. Identify and prosecute those responsible, both the direct perpetrators and any state officials who ordered, enabled, or covered up the killing;
3. Provide effective reparation to the family of Saud al-Faraj;
4. Take immediate steps to protect other defenders working in the same field from similar attacks.

I will follow this case closely until those responsible are held to account.

Respectfully,

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