

I am writing this letter to express my grave concern for Abdulkareem al-Hawaj who has been sentenced to death on 27 July by the specialized criminal court in Riyadh. His charges are a range of offences including “participating in illegal gatherings and chanting against the state” and using social media to share photos and videos of demonstrations.

However, according to court documents, these acts were carried out during Ramadan in August 2012, when Abdulkareem al-Hawaj was aged 16.

Moreover, the court appears to have based its decision solely on “confessions”, which he says he was forced into making while he was held incommunicado in solitary confinement and tortured, including being beaten and threatened with the death of his family. He denies all charges against him.

I urge you to quash the conviction of Abdulkareem al-Hawaj, and order a retrial in line with international fair trial standards without recourse to the death penalty.

I also call on you to order an independent investigation into his allegation of torture and other ill-treatment.

I would like to remind you that Saudi Arabia is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which strictly prohibits the use of the death penalty for crimes committed by persons below the age of 18.

In addition, I urge you to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely yours,