

I am writing this letter to express my grave concern for Khaled al-Omair, a human rights defender and retired security guard, who is still in detention for unknown reasons although his eight-year prison term has ended on 5 October. He has been on hunger strike since 6 October despite his poor health conditions.

Khaled al-Omair was arrested on 1 January 2009 on al-Naheda Street in Riyadh for helping to organize a protest against Israel's then-current military action in Gaza. He was arrested before the march even began. In al-Ha'ir political prison where he has been held in solitary confinement for the first seven months, there is an allegation that prisoners are tortured.

I would like to call on you to release Khaled al-Omair immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

I also urge you to ensure he has adequate access to qualified health professionals providing health care in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy, and informed consent.

In addition, I call on you to refrain from taking any punitive measures against him as a punishment for his hunger strike.

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

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely yours,