

30 Days for Freedom

4 April - 3 May 2014

#FreethePress

WAN-IFRA www.worldpressfreedomday.org

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28 April 2014

Your Majesty,

We are writing as part of the global online campaign '30 Days for Freedom' to call for the release of journalist Wajdi al-Ghazzawi and all journalists currently imprisoned in Saudi Arabia.

Wajdi al-Ghazzawi, the owner of Al-Fajr Media Group, was sentenced on 4 February 2013 by a criminal court in Riyadh to 12 years in prison. Mr. al-Ghazzawi had launched a TV talk show in 2011 entitled "Al-Fadfadah" that was one of the few programmes critical of Your Majesty's government. After seven instalments, the programme was deemed "liable to impact on public security" and subsequently shut down.

While Mr. al-Ghazzawi maintained that his show was intended to educate Saudi citizens, the prosecution in his case declared that those episodes – which included titles such as 'Intellectual Terrorism', 'Administrative Corruption', and 'Saudi Arabia and Terrorism' – "incited sedition" by accusing the kingdom of creating terrorism. Mr. Al-Ghazzawi was also banned from appearing in media and is unable to leave the country for 20 years.

Your Majesty, we are deeply concerned by the intensity of the recent crackdown against news providers in Saudi Arabia. Two other journalists from the critical news website Al-Fajr Cultural Network have also been behind bars since 2012, while authorities - aided by restrictive and vaguely worded media laws - continue to heavily censor media and Internet sites.

Your Majesty, we appeal to you to promote a better environment for freedom of expression in Saudi Arabia by recognising the crucial role of independent media. We urge you to seek stronger guarantees for press freedom and call for the release of Wajdi al-Ghazzawi and all journalists currently imprisoned because of their work.

Sincerely,

#FreethePress
The 30 Days for Freedom campaign

Organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, the '30 Days for Freedom' campaign aims to highlight the plight of imprisoned journalists worldwide in the 30 days leading up to 3 May, World Press Freedom Day.

www.wan-ifra.org / www.worldpressfreedomday.org

