**BY AIRMAIL**
His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the King Royal Court
RIYADH, **SAUDI ARABIA**

 <<PLACE>>, 10 December 2015

Your Majesty,

The Lawyers for Lawyers Foundation (L4L) has expressed its grave concerns about the continuing imprisonment of our colleague Mr. Waleed Abu al-Khair. (As a Dutch lawyer, )I fully share these concerns.

Waleed Abu al-Khair is a human rights lawyer, Founder and Director of the *Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia* (MHRSA Abu al-Khair also acted as lawyer of Raif Badawi who is imprisoned as well. In 2012, he was awarded the Olof Palme Prize for human rights for his “strong, self-sacrificing and sustained struggle to promote respect for human and civil rights for both men and women in Saudi Arabia”.

On February 15, 2015, the Specialized Criminal Court of Appeal in Riyadh confirmed a sentence of 15 years in prison, a travel ban of equal duration following imprisonment, and a fine of SR 200,000,- (approximately EUR 47,000,-). The charges against him are “striving to overthrow the state and the authority of the King”, “criticising and insulting the judiciary”, “assembling international organisations against the Kingdom”, “creating and supervising an unlicensed organisation”, and “contributing to the establishment of another” and “preparing and storing information that will affect public security”.

Various organizations, amongst them the Lawyers for Lawyers Foundation, fear that the sentence imposed on Waleed Abu al-Khair is connected to, and serves to frustrate, his invaluable human rights activities.

In view of this, I urge you to recognize the valuable role played by lawyers and to promote and support their work in line with the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders in 1990.

Paragraphs 16 of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers state that the Government is under an obligation 'to ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference', and to ensure that lawyers ‘shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics’.

Moreover, in an opinion adopted during a session held in September 2015, the United Nations (UN) Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) requested the release of Waleed Abu al-Khair, as well as eight other human rights defenders.

In its decision, the UN Working Group highlighted that the detention of Mr. Waleed Abu Al-Khair “***forms a part of both continued and recent persecution and crackdown on human rights activists in Saudi Arabia***”. The UN WGAD further stated that most of the offences that Mr. Abu Al-Khair has been convicted of are “*t****oo broad and imprecise, therefore allowing for interpretations that undermine fundamental rights such as the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly***”.

The UN WGAD concluded that “*t****he deprivation of liberty of Waleed Abu Al-Khair [and the eight other human rights defenders] is arbitrary, being in contravention of Articles 9, 10, 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights***”. Accordingly, the UN WGAD requested “***the Government of Saudi Arabia to release Waleed Abu Al-Khair and the other eight human rights defenders forthwith and bring their situation in conformity with the requirements of international human rights instruments***”, and to provide them “***with appropriate reparation”.***

Human Rights Day, 10 December, is the day that the UN General Assembly proclaimed in 1950 to bring to the attention ‘of the peoples of the world’ the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. In view of this, I urge the authorities of Saudi Arabia to comply with the decision of the United Nations Working Group and to release Mr. Waleed Abu al-Khair immediately and unconditionally.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

<<NAME>>