

TAKE ACTION: Please cut and paste this letter onto your personal or Institutional letterhead protesting the harassment of writer and journalist Wajeha Al-Huwaider.

10 November 2006

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz
Ministry of the Interior
P.O. Box 2933
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +011 966 1 403 1185
E-mail: info@mofa.gov.sa (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Excellency,

I wish to add my name to this appeal from PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the international writers' organization, International PEN. PEN Canada is writing to express concern about the recent harassment of leading Saudi writer and journalist **Wajeha Al-Huwaider**, and protests the banning order issued against her on 20 September 2006.

According to our information, Saudi Arabia's secret police, known as the *mabahith*, arrested al-Huwaider from her home on 20 September 2006, and interrogated her for six hours about a women's rights protest she was organizing. She had been planning a peaceful protest with a group of women to be held on Saudi Arabia's national day, September 23, although the protest was abandoned for fear of government reprisals. Prior to her release, Al-Huwaider was reportedly forced to sign a statement agreeing to cease all human rights activities, including writing articles, organizing protests and speaking to journalists or foreign organizations. Officers also reportedly threatened that she would lose her job with Aramco, the Saudi national oil company, if she were to break these pledges.

When al-Huwaider, who lives in Bahrain with her 14-year-old son, tried to return to Bahrain following her release, border officials told her that her name appeared on a list of persons banned from travel, and she was not allowed to leave Saudi Arabia. On 28 September, officials apparently lifted the ban and allowed her to return to Bahrain.

The police had previously detained al-Huwaider on 4 August as she staged a lone protest in Khobar advocating women's rights in the kingdom to mark the first anniversary of King Abdullah's accession to the throne. Her sign read: "Give women their rights."

PEN Canada protests the banning order issued against Saudi journalist and writer Wajeha Al-Huwaider solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to free expression, and calls for Al-Huwaider and all other journalists in Saudi Arabia to be allowed to practise their professions in accordance with Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Sincerely,

[Your name and address]

Copies to:

His Royal Highness Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz
Prime Minister
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
E-mail: sair@saudinf.net

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Ottawa
201 Sussex Drive
Ottawa ON K1N 1K6
Fax: +1 613 237 0567

Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations
405 Lexington Avenue, 56th Floor
New York NY 10017
Fax: +1 212 983 4895
E-mail: saudiarabia@un.int

Please send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:

The Hon. Peter MacKay
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Lester B. Pearson Building, Room A-10
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa ON K1A 0G2
Fax: (613) 996 3443
E-mail: peter.mackay@international.gc.ca

Peter Harder
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Gwyn Kutz
Director, Human Rights Division
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