




الكرامة
Alkarama

2021

**ANNUAL
REPORT**



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ABOUT ALKARAMA

Alkarama is a Geneva-based non-governmental human rights organisation established in 2004 to assist all those in the Arab world subjected to or at risk of extrajudicial execution, enforced disappearance, torture, and arbitrary detention. Acting as a bridge between individual victims and international human rights mechanisms, Alkarama works towards an Arab world where all individuals live in freedom and dignity, and are protected by the rule of law. In Arabic, Alkarama means dignity.

Assisting victims of human rights violations

Alkarama brings pro bono legal assistance to victims of the most serious human rights violations, without any discrimination. The organisation focuses its efforts on violations of the right to life, human dignity, physical integrity and freedoms such as, [extrajudicial executions](#), [enforced disappearances](#), [torture](#), and [arbitrary detention](#).

Using the international human rights mechanisms and working closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), we document individual cases of violations through direct contact with the victims, their families or lawyers, and submit complaints on their behalf to the United Nations (UN) Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies, asking them to intervene with the State in question to put an end to these violations.

Alkarama also gives a voice to the victims or their families by sharing their stories, as well as the recommendations issued by the various UN mechanisms on their cases, both on our website and through our social media channels. We also use the media, lobbying, advocacy campaigns, and collaboration with other NGOs and civil society to ensure the protection of victims.

Advocate for reforms to respect and protect human rights in all Arab countries

Based on our expertise on the Arab world and the individual cases Alkarama documents, we prepare in-depth reports on the human rights situation in each of the 20 countries we cover. These can be public reports, submissions to the Treaty Bodies – such as the Committee against Torture (CAT), the Human Rights Committee (HRCtee), and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) – ahead of a country’s review, or contributions to the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) that takes place every four to five years. We also work with local civil society to participate in the reviews of National Human Rights Institutions in the Arab region by the Sub-Committee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

On the basis of information submitted to them, all of these mechanisms issue recommendations aimed at improving the human rights situation in a given country, which can in turn be used by the local civil society to lobby for their implementation.

Raising awareness on human rights in the Arab world

Alkarama also brings media attention to the cases and situations it covers, helping victims to have their voices heard and shedding light on the human rights situation of a country, through press releases as well as public reports and analyses published in various media outlets. In order to reach a broader audience, we increasingly rely on social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook.

FORWARD

As Alkarama concludes its eighteenth year of human rights litigation and advocacy in the Middle East and North Africa, we cannot help but be torn between an ever-growing worry and even stronger hope.

An ever-growing concern first, because under the weight of repression, human rights defenders and Civil society activists, and as well as victim's families are increasingly wary of exposing human rights violations; either for fear of reprisals or lack of faith in the effectiveness of international human rights mechanisms in protecting them.

An even stronger hope, however, seeing the many great successes in the human rights movement in the Arab world, be it through the increase in legal knowledge or in the growing support among broad segments of public opinion.

Over time, still, we cannot ignore the major setbacks suffered by the human rights movement in the region and, with them, the weakening of people's belief in the relevance of non-violence and international law in their struggle for radical change.

For our part, our belief in the utmost relevance of non-violence and human rights in the struggle for redress and justice, has only been reinforced in the face of the many challenges brought by these long years of advocacy.

The revolutions known as the Arab Spring which took place at the beginning of the current decade voiced the aspirations of Arab peoples for democratic and civil states guaranteeing rights, freedoms, and equality before the law. Alkarama has proudly and constantly provided support to civil societies throughout these historical junctures. Alas, the counterrevolutions soon turned popular aspirations into nightmares of brutal and ruthless repression, civil wars and sectarian tensions. Undoubtedly, we hold that authoritarianism and its tools constitute the prime force moving this destructive machinery.

This is not without consequences. In recent years, we have lost contact with many of the victims' families, whose cases Alkarama had previously worked on – not for their unwillingness to claim justice but by fear of reprisals. Relatives of victims have understood through the many cases brought forward in the media, that using the only independent procedures left to be recognised as victims of their state's abuses, the UN mechanisms, now bears higher risks. This may lead in the mid to long term to the breakdown of these very important legal mechanisms, thereby reinforcing the climate of impunity which prevails for human rights abuses in the Arab region.

Authoritarian regimes, way too common in our region, of course, bear responsibility for the weakening of

these precious instruments of advocacy and peaceful objection against oppression. Yet, the main powers at the international level, must also answer for at the very least a lack of consideration for peoples suffering.

A striking example of this situation, the Syrian regime, which terrified the world with its crimes against its civilian population by indiscriminate bombings and use of chemical weapons, is welcomed back in international political and diplomatic arena by its peers, without having to answer for its crimes. Yet, in the face of what might be described as a struggle bound to fail, we cannot be blind to the glimmers of hope that keep on emerging and shining all throughout the region. We have never experienced such an increase in the number of activists and organisations involved in the defence of rights and freedoms. Never have they engaged so strongly with non-governmental Arabic media, particularly the new media, which, in turn, has become increasingly receptive to human rights issues. All these efforts greatly contribute to the crucial stigmatisation of regimes involved in human rights violations, even so given these regimes' relentless efforts to embellish their image on the international stage.

Over the years, Alkarama has devoted significant efforts towards defending victims of violations and, through documented information, has obtained resolutions and recommendations

issued by various UN mechanisms condemning violations and urging improvement in the human rights situation. Today, these decisions are often the only meaningful way for victims and defenders to obtain recognition, if not redress and a form of justice.

We therefore call on civil societies and UN experts to continue to work towards stopping retaliatory practices against victims, their families, and their defenders for peacefully pursuing justice. It is our hope that the collective efforts of peoples in general and human rights activists will lead to tangible achievements in ending impunity and bringing justice to the victims.

THE GULF

The Gulf area remains of particular concern as the conflict in **Yemen** continues to subject an entire population to severe violations of humanitarian and human rights law. In spite of the unprecedented crisis caused by these violations in Yemen, in 2021, several important arm deals with western countries such as France, have allowed belligerents, particularly the **United Arab Emirates** and **Saudi Arabia**, to increase their military capacity. These two regional powers involved in the conflict continue to carry out these violations in complete impunity.

Accountability is even harder to reach because of the permeability of UN procedures to political considerations. In 2021 alone, the Human Rights Council discontinued a complaint on gross and systematic violations committed by Saudi Arabia against its civil society and to put an end to the mandate of the Group of experts investigating in Yemen on abuses committed by all parties to the conflict.

The situation in terms of public freedoms is far from improving. While **Qatar** saw its first ever legislative elections being carried out in early October 2021, the process did not comply with fundamental principles of free and fair elections enshrined in universal human rights instruments. Several opponents were arbitrarily barred from participating in the electoral process.

This year's [report of Alkarama](#) to the Secretary-General on reprisals against persons cooperating with United Nations human rights mechanisms focused mainly on cases from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Submitted in April 2021, the report highlighted three particularly concerning cases of reprisals against individuals who had submitted complaints to the United Nations, namely [Dr Salman ALODAH](#) (Salman Al Awda), [Abdullah ALAOU DH](#) and [Khaled ALODAH](#) (Saudi Arabia) and [Mr Ahmad Ali Mekkaoui](#) (United Arab Emirates).

***State of public freedoms:
right of association,
peaceful assembly,
expression and media,
human rights defenders***

Over the past decade, Alkarama has been documenting large crackdowns on peaceful criticism in the gulf such as the “UAE 94” case, which is still ongoing in the UAE. This case refers to a group of 94 persons, including lawyers, human rights defenders, and academics who were sentenced to 10 years in prison in July 2013 on vague charges such as “conspiring to overthrow the government”. In June 2021, Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, [called](#) on the UAE to release immediately five human rights defenders imprisoned since 2013, referring to allegations of torture, ill-treatment and unfair trials. In her statement, the UN human rights expert called on the UAE authorities to release immediately Mohammed Al-Mansoori, Hassan Mohammed Al-Hammad, Hadif Rashid Abdullah Al-Owais, Ali Saeed Al-Kindi and Salim Hamdoun Al-Shehhi, all prosecuted in the “UAE 94” case.

The UAE goes way further than arbitrary detention in its repression of peaceful opponents. They subject their families to harassment and reprisals, besides depriving them of all contact with their detained relatives. In November 2021, UAE activist

Abd al-Salam Darwish al-Marzouqi, currently serving a ten-year sentence in the UAE 94 case, [mourned](#) the death of his son Salman, who was barred from seeing him. With Abd al-Salam Darwish al-Marzouqi, the Emirati authorities collectively punished his family by revoking his children's citizenship, denying them access to essential services such as medical care. As a result, Salman, who suffered from cerebral palsy from an early age, eventually died for lack of care, waiting in vain to see his father again after years of being deprived of any contact with him.

Earlier in the year another peaceful opponent from the UAE 94 also lost a child after years of separation. In June 2021, Emirati prisoner of conscience Mohammed Abdul Razzaq Al-Siddiq and the human rights family mourned human rights activist Alaa Al-Siddiq, who [died](#) following a traffic accident in Oxford, UK.

While the situation remains dire for human rights defenders and other peaceful activists in Saudi Arabia, Alkarama was [informed](#) on 19 April 2021, that the Working Group on Situations of the Human Rights Council (HRC) decided to discontinue a complaint procedure against the Kingdom' authorities that had been ongoing since Alkarama initiated the procedure in February 2016. [The HRC complaint procedure](#) was established in

2007 to address consistent patterns of gross and reliably attested violations of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The complaint submitted to the HRC in February 2016 documented gross human rights violations committed by the Saudi authorities, focusing on the systematic arbitrary detention of peaceful dissidents, including following unfair trials before the Specialised Criminal Court. Following the decision of the Working Group on Situations of the HRC to put an end to the procedure instead of referring it to the Council for consideration, [Alkarama published a letter](#) in which it expressed its dismay and made its initial complaint [public](#). In its letter, Alkarama highlighted that with this decision, the HRC's Complaint Procedure has failed to fulfil its purpose and contributed to the pervasive climate of impunity with which the authorities continue to act, before adding that it amounted to an « affront to the many victims of abuses in Saudi Arabia ».

This decision is even more concerning that the situation of human rights defenders and other peaceful opponents in Saudi Arabia has in fact deteriorated in complete impunity. The lack of safeguards to protect and promote public freedoms directly affects the right to participate in public affairs. In Kuwait notably, [Alkarama documented](#) on 21 March 2021 the

arrests of former MPs, activists and academics while they attended a press conference in solidarity with the National Assembly MP Badr Al-Dahoum. The participants denounced the decision of the Constitutional Court to cancel the parliamentary status of the deputy, on the pretext that he insulted the Emir of Kuwait, Sabah Al-Ahmad.

For the past years, Alkarama has repeatedly [expressed concerns](#) over the regression of civil and political rights in Kuwait. Particularly, Alkarama highlighted in its [reports](#) to the UN mechanisms, that the use of incriminations such as “insulting the Emir” amounts to “lèse-majesté” and is contrary to Kuwait's obligations under articles 19 and 25 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), which protects the right to freedom of expression and to participate in the conduct of public affairs.

Right to liberty and security of persons: enforced disappearances, summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention

Lengthy arbitrary detention in secret locations constitutes a habitual mean of silencing critical voices in Saudi Arabia in complete violation of the right to liberty and security. On 14 July 2021, [Alkarama sent](#) an urgent appeal to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention regarding the situation of Mr

Suleiman bin Ahmed bin Abdulaziz Al Duwaish. Detained since 22 April 2016 by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's personal guard for posting a series of tweets critical of him, Al Duwaish's family remains unaware of his whereabouts.

The absence of fundamental guarantees in detention has been the major subject of [Alkarama's submission](#) to the Committee against Torture as a list of issues and questions to be raised in the framework of the upcoming Saudi Arabia's 3rd periodic review. Alkarama submitted its report on 21 June 2021 for the review scheduled for late 2022. In its document, Alkarama highlighted through cases and legal analysis that the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia, which was already a source of great concern since its last review in 2016, has deteriorated further under Crown Prince Mohammed Ben Salman.

Under his authoritarian rule, repression has intensified in violation of international law, leading to the arbitrary deprivation of liberty and torture of hundreds of human rights defenders. Furthermore, Alkarama underlined the recommendations made by the CAT to repeal the Anti-Terrorism Act's dispositions containing an extremely broad definition of terrorism – which allows for the criminalisation of peaceful criticism of the state or the royal authorities – have been instead toughened.

The Saudi authorities consistently fail in their duty to prevent acts of torture and thus contribute to the general climate of impunity in the country.

Following this [submission](#), the Committee published, on 21 November 2021, its own [list of issue](#) to be addressed by the Saudi authorities in a separate document before its review by the UN experts to be held in 2022. The list of issues is drawn up by the Committee on the basis of information contained in reports submitted by the State party and NGOs. It aims to ensure a constructive dialogue with the State party during its next periodic review, by inviting the State party to provide clarification on specific issues regarding its compliance with the Convention.

The Committee shared Alkarama's concern about the lack of independence of the Department of Investigation and Prosecution. It will question Saudi Arabia on the measures taken to ensure the full independence of the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution from the Ministry of Interior, as well as on the existence of an independent prison monitoring body. Finally, based on Alkarama's proposal, the UN body invited the State party to submit annual statistics from 2016 to date on the number of complaints filed with the competent authorities, the investigations carried out and their results.

FOCUS ON

ABUSES CONTINUE UNABATED AMIDST COMPLETE IMPUNITY IN

YEMEN

Since the outbreak of armed conflict in Yemen, Alkarama has been documenting the deterioration of the human rights situation in the country, repeatedly condemning the prevalent climate of impunity. Over the years, Alkarama has submitted dozens of individual complaints to the United Nations' human rights special procedures, including violations committed by all parties to the conflict in the country, such as arrests, [enforced disappearances](#) and [acts of torture](#). In February 2021, a [report](#) issued by the [UN Security Council Sanctions Committee](#) stated that all parties to the conflict in Yemen continuously committed serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including indiscriminate attacks against civilians, enforced disappearances, and torture.



Houthi fighters fighting in Sana'a against the coalition forces. Credit: Maad Ali/ImagesLive/ZUMA Wire/Alamy Live News, 2017.

On 4 April 2021, [Alkarama sent an urgent appeal](#) to the [Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#), Agnes Callamard, regarding four journalists detained in Yemen, at risk of execution following a trial before the Houthis' Specialized Criminal Court, which lacks any guarantee of minimum standards of justice.



[Watch video](#)

The plight of journalists in Yemen...a documentary produced by Alkarama Organization.

The four journalists are currently spending their sixth consecutive year in prison, under constant psychological and physical torture, as [reprisals](#) for having documented violations committed by the Houthis. In mid-October 2020, five journalists held in Houthi (Ansar Allah) prisons were [released](#) in Sana'a, as part of a prisoner exchange agreement reached under the auspices of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross between the Houthi group, the recognised Yemeni government, and

Saudi Arabia. The released journalists revealed during a press conference that they had been subjected to severe torture and ill-treatment in Houthi prisons.

Severe abuses continue to be committed by all parties to the conflict and involve both state and non-state actors. Former detainee Salem Al-Rubaizi gave a [harrowing testimony](#) exemplifying the complete lawlessness in which Yemenis are being kept. Arrested by the UAE-backed Shabwani Elite on June 10, 2019, secretly detained and transferred from one facility to the other during several years. One of these facilities was the Balhaf oil complex, managed by the French company Total, in the Yemeni province of Shabwa, and serving as an unofficial Emirati secret prison in Yemen. He was subjected to electric shocks and severe beatings to force him to confess to fabricated charges of “communicating with a foreign country”, before being released in early April 2021.

Alkarama, who was in contact with the family of detainee al-Rubaizi during his detention documented his case along with dozens of individual complaints to the UN Human Rights Special Procedures, on [violations](#) including arbitrary deprivation of life and liberty as well as torture and enforced disappearances. [Parallel reports](#) were also presented during the Universal Periodic Review, highlighting these

abuses and calling for the impunity to end. In early 2021, a [report](#) issued by the Security Council Sanctions Committee indicated that all parties to the conflict in Yemen continue to commit serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including indiscriminate attacks against civilians, enforced disappearances, and torture.

Enforced disappearance is still committed habitually by Houthi militias. On 28 September 2021, [Alkarama submitted](#) to the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances urgent appeals regarding the kidnapping of two Yemenis, Abkar Abdallah Abed Yahya BARKHALI and Tareq Ahmed Said Mohammed KHALEQ. They were both abducted in the course of 2016 by Houthi militiamen in the governorate of Al Hudaydah in western Yemen and their respective families have been unaware of their fates and whereabouts since. Other cases of enforced disappearance [documented by Alkarama](#) to the WGEID include those of three Yemenis who were arbitrarily arrested by the de facto authorities in Hudaydah, western Yemen, and taken to unknown destinations. On 17 September 2021, Alkarama wrote to the experts with the hope that their families would finally be informed of their relatives' fates and whereabouts – which remain unknown to date.

Torture and ill-treatment in UAE-controlled detention facilities have made numerous victims such as former Yemeni prisoner Abdul Qadir Al Shaibani (Al Budhaiji) who [died](#) in October 2021, only a few weeks after his [release](#) as a direct result of the abuses he suffered in detention. Relatives of Al-Shaibani told Alkarama that when the 66-year-old preacher was released he was barely alive and suffered from multiple disabilities and chronic illnesses that were untreated in detention. Al-Shaibani was kidnapped in front of his family by members of the UAE-backed Security Belt forces on 30 October in the southern Yemeni city of Aden. Shortly after, Alkarama submitted his case to the WGEID and later learned that he had been transferred by Emirati authorities from one detention centre to the other and subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

On 27 September 2021, Alkarama and other organisations [addressed](#) the United Nations regarding the harrowing practice of collective executions by the de facto authorities in Sana'a, the Houthi group "Ansar Allah. An urgent appeal was submitted to the UN Special Procedures on 24 September concerning the unlawful sentencing to death of 9 Yemenis, requesting the experts to urgently intervene and stop the arbitrary executions of detainees.

On 18 September 2021, the authorities of the Houthi group "Ansar Allah" **executed** nine civilians after the "Specialised criminal court" – a court of exception under the armed group – handed down death sentences against them following summary trials. All victims were subjected to enforced disappearance, and torture to force them to sign statements incriminating them in the death of Houthi leader Saleh Al-Sammad killed in April 2018 in Hodeidah governorate by a Saudi-coalition airstrike. The execution of the civilians – one of whom was only seventeen at the time of his arrest – was carried out with arms, in the presence of hundreds of participants in a public square and accompanied by singing and dancing.

In spite of this dire human rights and humanitarian situation, the Human Rights Council **rejected** in October 2021 a resolution to renew the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, the only independent mechanism documenting violations committed by all parties to the conflict. This decision – which caused **shock and dismay** in the human rights community – derived from efforts led by Gulf countries to put an end to the mandate of the experts after they had investigated and denounced serious abuses. This "**major setback**" was followed in early December by a **call** from more than 60 NGOs, including Alkarama, urging the UN General

Assembly (UNGA) to establish a new investigative mechanism. In their **open letter**, the NGOs underlined that failure to act from the UNGA would not only be a vote for impunity in Yemen, but also tantamount to a green light to commit further abuses and war crimes.

Before this vote, 62 human rights organisations, including **Alkarama**, **sent a letter** to members of the United Nations Human Rights Council ahead of the Council's 48th session, calling for the formation of an international investigative body focusing on criminal cases in Yemen and to guarantee the Panel of Eminent Experts on Yemen's work under a continuous or multi-year mandate.

Amidst this conflict, however, a first batch of **Yemeni Guantanamo detainees** who were held in the UAE could return to Yemen in August 2021, almost 20 years after their arrest. Last October, UN human rights experts **condemned** the UAE for the arbitrary detention and ill-treatment of Yemeni detainees returning from Guantanamo Bay, expressing concern about the risk of their forced return to their country, Yemen, in the light of the continuing armed conflict and humanitarian crisis. For years, the issue of Guantanamo detainees has been at the top of **Alkarama's agenda**, through various support and advocacy mechanisms. Alkarama has organised or taken part in many field actions alongside the

families of the detainees and non-governmental organisations, in order to highlight the suffering of the victims of this infamous detention centre and [their families](#).

FOCUS ON

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ARE SILENTLY AND SLOWLY KILLED IN DETENTION

SAUDI ARABIA

The Saudi crown is slowly disabling and killing its most prominent critics by keeping them arbitrarily and in cruel and inhumane conditions in solitary confinement. Many of them acquired severe impairments.

This year saw another eminent peaceful critic of the crown's authoritarian rule die in detention. On Tuesday 12 October 2021, Saudi academic Musa Al-Qarni died after nearly 15 years of arbitrary detention in inhumane conditions, in violation of a UN resolution confirming the arbitrary nature of his detention and requesting his release. Al-Qarni's is the second Saudi political opposition figure to die in the Kingdom's prisons



Death Saudi academic Musa Al-Qarni in prison before his death. documentary produced by Alkarama Organization.

in less than two years, as prominent political activist and prisoner Dr Abdullah al-Hamid "Abu Bilal" died in similar circumstances. [Alkarama expressed](#) its dismay and serious concerns about the fate of hundreds of prisoners of conscience, activists and human rights defenders in the country.



In March 2021, Alkarama briefed the European Parliament's Human Rights Commission on the situation of political prisoners in Saudi Arabia.

Following this death, [Alkarama addressed](#) on 9 November 2021, the WGAD regarding the situation of Saud Al Hashimi who has been arbitrarily detained since his arrest by the intelligence services (mabahith) on 2 February 2007 – i.e. 15 years ago. Mr Al Hashimi was later sentenced by the Specialised Criminal Court to 30 years in prison on vague charges such as “financing terrorism” and after an unfair trial.

At a later stage of their detention, some

of the peaceful critics detained for their activism were transferred from Al-Ruwais prison in Jeddah to places of house arrest, where they could receive their families, but could not leave the residences. However, Dr Saud al-Hashimi and Dr Musa Al-Qarni were kept in complete isolation in detention. Al-Qarni, Al-Hashimi and their companions had gone on hunger strike several times, protesting the harsh conditions of their detention and the restrictions imposed on them, besides the continued detention without due process by the Saudi authorities, for the sole reason of exercising their fundamental rights to free and peaceful expression of their political views.

Following his arrest, Alkarama submitted the case of Al Hashimi as well other eminent figures prosecuted in the same case, to the WGAD, which declared in its Opinion 27/2007 that his detention was arbitrary and called on the Saudi authorities to immediately release him.

Moreover, on 20 August 2021, Alkarama [shared its concerns](#) with UN independent experts about the fate of detained peaceful human rights activist Muhammad Abdullah Al-Otaibi, who has been subjected to increasing abuses and reprisals in detention. The Specialised Criminal Court notably increased the sentence against him, adding three additional years of imprisonment for

“travelling to Qatar”– bringing the total sentence to 17 years. He was also charged with "establishing an illegal association" and "spreading chaos and inciting public opinion against the state" because of his establishment of the association "Union for Human Rights" with [Abdullah Al-Atawi](#), which aims to promote the values and principles enshrined in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). His trial was grossly unfair as highlighted by the WGAD in its [Opinion](#) based on a [complaint submitted by Alkarama](#), calling for his immediate release.

Similarly, on 4 September 2021, Alkarama [documented](#) to the UN independent experts the situation of human rights defender Issa Al-Nukhaifi who went on hunger strike while in detention in Al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh. According to reliable sources, the Saudi authorities have recently increased their repressive measures against prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders. Saudi security authorities arrested prominent Saudi lawyer and human rights defender Issa Al-Nukhaifi, on 18 December 2016. On 17 January 2017, Alkarama sent an [urgent appeal](#) to the [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#), asking him to call on the Saudi authorities to immediately release him.

Another striking example of Saudi's harsh crackdown on its most eminent critics, Alkarama had previously

referred the case of the well-known Islamic scholar Salman Alodah - whose arrest on 9 September 2017 marked the beginning of a [major crackdown on freedom of expression in Saudi Arabia](#). Since his arbitrary arrest, the authorities have continuously kept Dr Alodah outside of the law's protection, with long periods of secret and incommunicado detention.

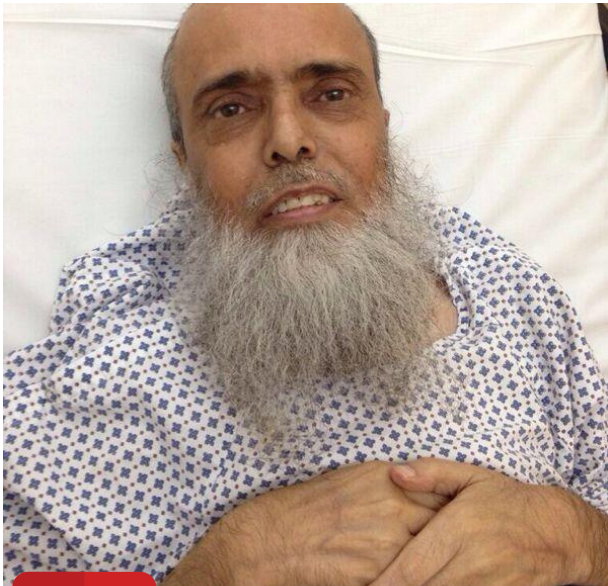


Watch video

Islamic scholar Salman Alodah remains in arbitrary detention in spite of international calls for his immediate release.

He has been in complete solitary confinement since day one and was subjected to sensory deprivations, as well as other various forms of physical and psychological torture. After it raised the case of [Safar Al Hawali](#), Alkarama [submitted](#) in January 2021 to the [Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#) a complaint on behalf of [Dr Salman Alodah](#). Highlighting the complete lack of independence of medical care in Saudi

prisons, Alkarama insisted that only his safe release and return to his family could effectively avoid possible irreparable damage to his life.



[Watch video](#)

The case of Safar Al Hawali, is under consideration by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) after a complaint from Alkarama.

Other peaceful opponents are kept in conditions amounting to an imminent threat for their physical and mental integrity. On 6 September 2021, [Alkarama seized](#) the UN Special Rapporteur against Torture regarding the situation of Mohammed AL Qahtani, human rights defender and founding member of the Saudi Association of civil and political rights (ACPRA), sentenced on 9 March 2013 to ten years in prison. In protest against his conviction and his harsh conditions of detention, he has more than once gone on hunger strike. However, in retaliation for the hunger strikes, he was transferred to a wing of the prison reserved for people with psychiatric disorders and his conditions

of detention were worsened by the prison administration. At present, Mr. Al Qahtani, detained in unbearable conditions, is at constant risk of physical assault.

For this reason, Mr. Al Qahtani began another hunger strike on 17 August 2021 to demand the same conditions of detention as the other detainees. Deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation of Mr. Al Qahtani and given the urgent situation regarding his security in detention, Alkarama [submitted his case](#) to the UN Special Rapporteur against Torture. The complaint stressed that the placement of Mr. Al Qahtani in a section reserved for detainees suffering from mental illnesses and exhibiting aggressive behaviour is contrary to article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which enshrines the prohibition of all cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.



Members of the Saudi Association of civil and political rights (ACPRA).

THE MAGHREB

The north African region continued to experience popular protests from Mauritania to Tunisia, while the situation in Libya remains of particular concern due to the severe violations to human rights and humanitarian law committed by parties to the conflict. All across the region, Covid-19 was used as a pretext to restrict even more access to public space and gathering, while violations against [journalists](#) and online critical voices, particularly on social media, continued unabated.

Alkarama's concerns in Mauritania have been raised during the [Universal Periodic Review](#) of the country which took place in Geneva in January 2021. Issues raised by Alkarama in previous [reports](#) included systematic violations of the right to peaceful assembly through the use of excessive force and arrests of demonstrators, particularly against the Harratine community; the judicial persecution of human rights defenders, anti-slavery activists and peaceful political opponents; as well as the lack of independent and effective preventive and complaints mechanisms

in detention to prevent torture and incommunicado situations and the lack of accountability.

The absence of accountability has also been a major subject of Alkarama's work on Algeria, both concerning crimes committed during the 1990s civil war and violations against HIRAK participants and activists. On 27 September 2021, [the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence](#) along with five other UN experts sent a [joint letter of allegation](#) to the Algerian authorities regarding the lack of accountability process for past crimes. The experts drew the Government's attention to "the negative impact that the legislation and regulations adopted in Algeria since the end of the civil war have had on the realisation of victims' rights to an effective remedy, to justice and to the truth regarding the serious human rights violations committed during that period. In addition, the experts stressed that the "excessive restrictions on the rights to freedom of opinion and

expression, peaceful assembly and association” contained in Algerian law undermine “the activities of victims and their associations” and result in the “criminalisation of peaceful demonstrations demanding justice”.

The human rights situation in Tunisia has also raised serious concerns, particularly with the suspension of Parliament by President Kaïs Saïed on 25 July 2021. This suspension was accompanied by increased repression by the executive against its political opponents, including parliamentarians.

***State of public freedoms:
right of association,
peaceful assembly,
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human rights defenders***

Alkarama has followed the deteriorating human rights situation and the escalating repression of the Hirak movement in Algeria again this year with great concern. Three years on, the Hirak continues to carry the hopes of the population for a civil and democratic state, through a non-violent action that is being met by the authorities with ever increasing repression. In its March 2021 [statement](#), the OHCHR said that while protests “which had been ongoing on the internet due to the Covid-19 pandemic, have resumed in the streets”, the authorities are responding to these protests in the same repressive manner as in 2019 and 2020.

Alkarama [shared](#) the growing concern of the High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the government's attacks on “the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and participation in public affairs”. Therefore, Alkarama [called](#) on the Algerian authorities to release all those arrested solely for participating in the peaceful movement, and to put an end to all forms of harassment and intimidation against them. In September 2021, Alkarama submitted a legal analysis to several human rights protection mechanisms highlighting the current human rights situation in Algeria and the pressing challenges faced by civil society in their peaceful use of their fundamental freedom in the context of the “Hirak”. This year's legislative developments suggest a military takeover on judicial powers, including investigation and prosecution of civilians for ordinary crimes. Additionally, the army leadership monopolises de facto executive powers in Algeria through the High Security Council (HSC), which has been producing most of this year's legislative changes, in violation of the principle of legality and core rule of law principles.

The situation in Morocco is also concerning and Alkarama has been working to address both individual cases and general analysis to UN's independent experts. On 1 July 2021, Alkarama filed an urgent appeal to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary

Detention (WGAD) regarding the situation of [Mr Driss SEDRAOUI](#), President of the Moroccan League for Citizenship and Human Rights. Mr. Driss Sedraoui was arrested following a speech he gave at an event organised by a collective of women activists to mark International Women's Day on 8 March 2021. Mr Sedraoui was subsequently sentenced after an unfair trial to eight months in prison and a heavy fine under the pretext of an alleged violation of the "state of emergency". This is his [third arbitrary detention](#), having been arrested twice before for his peaceful human rights activism.

The case of Mr Sedraoui strikingly illustrates the situation of human rights defenders in Morocco, a country in which peaceful criticism of the authorities can lead to harassment and arbitrary deprivation of liberty. On 1 July 2021, Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, [publicly called](#) on Morocco to "stop targeting human rights defenders and journalists" and "allow them to work without reprisals". While this statement focused specifically on those defending human rights issues related to Western Sahara, the practices denounced - ranging from harassment to the use of violence by law enforcement officials - are relevant to all peaceful activists working on sensitive issues in Morocco.

The repression against peaceful

activists can also take the form of international arrest warrants issued by countries of the Arab region through The International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol). Alkarama has been working these past years toward greater transparency and access to justice in the Interpol cooperation process, particularly given its misuse by Arab states. As a result of this advocacy, Interpol has [cancelled](#) an arrest warrant issued against prominent Moroccan-German activist Mohamed Hajib, following appeal proceedings before the international body, which ruled that the arrest mandate was issued against Mr Hajib for merely exercising his right to expression. In this case, as in many other similar ones in the region, the Moroccan prosecutor's office had issued an international arrest warrant for Mr Hajib for his opposition to the Moroccan authorities.

In Tunisia, [arbitrary measures](#) by the government against opponents have multiplied since the decision by the President of the Republic to suspend the Parliament. Following the suspension of Parliament, the President decided to lift the parliamentary immunity. A series of violations of individual and collective freedoms ensued, including arbitrary arrests and illegal house arrest of MPs and senior officials, including judges and politicians.

On 15 September 2021, the Association

of Victims of Torture in Tunisia (AVTT) and Alkarama [petitioned](#) the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention regarding the situation of the former Minister of Information Technology and Digital Economy, Mr Anouar MAAROUF, and the MP and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence, Mr Yousri DALY, respectively under house arrest since 5 and 18 August 2021. Since 25 July 2021, dismissals by simple presidential decision have proliferated, affecting many senior administrative and judicial officials, some of whom have been placed under house arrest by mere administrative decision.

Right to liberty and security of persons: enforced disappearances, summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention

The use of torture and ill-treatment in detention remains a major concern throughout the region, particularly in Algeria, where the authorities have increasingly resorted to these practices to punish Hirak activists. One of the victims of these serious violations is [Yasser ROUIBAH](#), 20 years old, victim of torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment by police officers. Arrested by the police on 23 April 2021, during a peaceful Hirak demonstration in Oran, he was placed in police custody in total isolation from the outside world. During his detention he was

severely tortured to force him to implicate other peaceful Hirak activists.



[Watch video](#)

A UN statement calls on the authorities to end the use of violence against demonstrators in Algeria.

It was only six days after his arrest, on 30 April 2021, that Yasser ROUIBAH was brought before the public prosecutor and charged with “inciting citizens to revolt”, “undermining national unity”, “distributing leaflets that undermine the national interest” and “belonging to an illegal organisation active abroad”, alluding to the “Rachad” organisation.

Arbitrary detentions in Libya are committed by all sides to the conflict, with severe consequences on the right to life, liberty, and security throughout the country. On 11 August 2021, Alkarama submitted a [complaint](#) to the WGAD regarding the situation of Mr Sulaiman Muhammad Salim SULAIMAN and Mr Abdelhakim Imabarak Mohammed ALI, both arrested in 2016

by the “Special Deterrence Forces” in western Libya. Also known as the “RADA” forces, this militia is one of the main security forces operating in the Libyan capital, Tripoli.

While nominally dependent on the Ministry of the Interior, these forces operate autonomously and arbitrarily detain hundreds of individuals in a facility located at Mitiga airport. While the UN has already addressed the extent of arbitrary detention in Libya while various human rights organisations have reported disturbing violations committed with impunity by Libyan militias. Concerned by these recurring violations in the country, Alkarama [again called](#) on the WGAD to intervene on behalf of these two victims and to recall the importance of placing all of these militias without exception under the effective control of the government and the judicial authority.

Violations committed by the RADA forces have already been raised by Alkarama with the UN experts, who have in turn highlighted the need for accountability. In August 2021, the WGAD [expressed its regrets](#) to the Government of Libya's National Accord regarding the lack of implementation of the working group's recommendations calling for the release of Mr Mustafa Talib Younis Abdel Khaleq Al-Darsi, who has been arbitrarily detained since 6 January 2016, as well as compensation to the victim.

The WGAD recalled its [Opinion No. 13/2020](#) judging Al-Darsi's detention to be arbitrary, issued following the [complaint filed](#) by Alkarama in October 2016. Since his abduction by RADA forces in the city of Zliten on 6 January 2016, Al Darsi remains detained incommunicado in the Mitiga airport detention centre, under inhumane conditions. To date, he has not been allowed to see a lawyer, nor to challenge the legality of his detention. His family has also been prevented from visiting him for eight months following his arrest.

Impunity remains a major concern for Alkarama in its work with the United Nations, a concern that has been echoed repeatedly by experts. In July 2021, Libya experienced the [assassination of field commanders](#) within General Khalifa Haftar's forces. Among them were commanders wanted for war crimes, including executions against civilians. These killings may be part of a ploy to liquidate witnesses against wanted major criminals and their regional and international supporters.

These killings suggest that Haftar and his sons have an interest in neutralising the "enforcement officers" of the new Libyan scene, in cleaning up their image and in evading responsibility for these crimes as decision makers. These actions are even more preoccupying as Haftar's militia is supported by Egypt,

Saudi Arabia, Russia, and France. In this regard, Alkarama has [addressed](#) the UN bodies concerned with the Libyan file, in particular the fact-finding mission on violations committed by all parties in Libya established by the Human Rights Council, to call on them to investigate these killings and reveal their circumstances.

FOCUS ON

A YEAR OF LITIGATION BEFORE THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ON VIOLATIONS COMMITTED IN

ALGERIA

This year has been rich in litigation before the UN Human Rights Committee (HR Committee), particularly concerning individual cases brought forward by Alkarama on violations committed during and after the civil war. Most cases involve serious abuses committed by different branches of the Algerian security forces, including instances of arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial executions. In all these proceedings, the Algerian authorities refused to cooperate in good faith with the Committee's experts while the latter acceded to the victims' rightful claims. Alkarama remains particularly vigilant in monitoring the authorities' compliance to these important Committee decisions.



Families of victims of enforced disappearances continue to organise sit-ins in Algiers.

Violation to the right to physical integrity during detention in Algeria has been a constant preoccupation of Alkarama. On 26 May 2021, Alkarama [submitted](#) the case of Mr. Abderrahmane Labreche to the Human Rights Committee. This 57-year-old English-Algerian citizen was arbitrarily arrested on 29 June 2012 by agents of the Department of Research and Security (DRS) at Algiers International Airport. He was then secretly detained and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment until his release on 14 July 2012.

His case demonstrates the disturbing persistence and resurgence of severe abuses such as enforced disappearance and torture by DRS forces against those deemed to be critics of the Algerian authorities. Such practices were commonplace during the civil war and Alkarama continues to submit individual complaints to the Human Rights Committee on behalf of the families of the thousands of victims of what had been described as amounting to a crime against humanity.

During its 130th session held between 12 October and 6 November 2020, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee [issued its decision](#) in the case of Achour Berkaoui, who was arrested in El Mouradia (wilaya of Algiers) in 1994 by a group of security agents. Upon his arrest, he disappeared and despite all the family's efforts, the

Algerian authorities have failed to inform his family of his fate and whereabouts. On 4 June 2015, Alkarama [submitted](#) a complaint to the Human Rights Committee on behalf of his family. After 27 years of denial of justice by the Algerian authorities, the Berkaoui family won their case before the UN Human Rights Committee.

The Human Rights Committee [demanded](#) from the Algerian authorities that an investigation into the disappearance of Achour Berkaoui be carried out without delay, that he be immediately released if he is still alive, or that his remains be handed over to his family if he has died in detention. Once again, the Committee insisted on Algeria's obligation to "prosecute, try and punish those responsible for the violations committed", to provide adequate compensation to the family and to the victim if he is alive. In its decision, the Committee stressed the need to repeal Ordinance No. 06-01 implementing the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, which is contrary to the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Indeed, the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation not only creates a climate of impunity by establishing a general amnesty for state agents who have committed serious violations of humanitarian and human rights laws, but it also makes it impossible for the families of victims to seek legal redress,

in violation of Article 2§3 of the ICCPR, which guarantees the right to an effective remedy.

Individual complaints to the Human Rights Committee regarding violations committed during the civil conflict cover issues ranging from enforced disappearances to extrajudicial killings. For instance, at its November 2021 session, the HR Committee also rendered its [decision](#) concerning the case of Fateh Dafaar, who was summarily executed on 26 November 1994, at the age of 34, by officers of the National Gendarmerie who had previously arrested him at his workplace. Following his arrest, Dafaar's family asked the authorities in vain for information on his fate and whereabouts. Three months later, his family found his body among those of several [victims of extrajudicial executions](#) committed by the gendarmes.

In its [decision](#), the HR Committee underlined the refusal of the Algerian authorities to cooperate, notably in the communication of information during the procedure. After recognising the acts of disappearance, torture, and summary execution, and in the absence of any rebuttal from the Algerian authorities, the Committee concluded that Algeria "denied Fateh Dafaar the right to life under especially grave circumstances". The Committee also acknowledged that Fateh Dafaar had

been subjected to ill-treatment and torture prior to his execution and that he had "undoubtedly been the victim of severe psychological distress and mental suffering prior to his execution". Furthermore, the Committee also acknowledged the "anguish and distress" that his execution has caused his family, coupled with their sense of helplessness in the face of the authorities' refusal to respect their right to truth and justice.

This decision follows another ruling on violations committed by state forces during the internal conflict published earlier this year regarding the enforced disappearance of former Algerian National Liberation Army officer [Sadek Rsiwi](#). This decision follows a [complaint](#) lodged by Alkarama on 7 September 2016 regarding the former officer's disappearance since his abduction by soldiers from the military sector of Ghardaïa from his home in early March 1996. The kidnapping followed the victim's refusal to take the lead of a local paramilitary militia. Since then, all efforts undertaken by the family with judicial and administrative institutions to obtain information on the victim's fate have remained fruitless.

In its [decision](#), the Committee urged Algeria to "conduct without delay an effective, thorough, rigorous, independent, impartial and transparent investigation into the disappearance" and to inform the family of the results

of the investigation. Finally, the Committee reaffirmed that the Algerian authorities persist in committing serious human rights violations by failing to repeal the provisions of Ordinance No. 06-01 implementing the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, which amnestied the crimes of security agents committed in the 1990s.



Watch video

Abdallah Benaoum, detained on the basis of the 2006 Charter for having publicly denounced impunity. Documentary produced by Alkarama.

The expert warned about the negative impact of Algerian legislation on victims' rights to an effective remedy, justice, and truth in relation to the serious human rights violations committed during the civil war. The expert also underlined the excessive restrictions on the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association contained in the Algerian legal framework. These restrictions systematically interfere with the activities of victims and their associations, notably through the criminalisation of peaceful demonstrations demanding justice.

Human rights litigation focused on the consequences of the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation on accountability, transitional justice and victim's rights to truth and justice has been highlighted by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence in his [letter](#) sent to the Algerian authorities on 27 September 2021.

THE MASHREQ

On 18 January 2021, the Human Rights Council [considered the report](#) on the periodic review of Lebanon. Civil society [regretted](#) that Lebanon rejected recommendations calling on it to ensure the protection of peaceful demonstrators, to end the recruitment of child soldiers by armed groups and to ratify the [Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees](#). In addition, Lebanese civil society noted that although Lebanon has pledged to implement the recommendations aimed at ensuring the investigation of the Beirut port explosion, authorities responsible for investigating the explosion were attacked. As a result, NGOs called for the establishment of an independent commission of enquiry into the explosion, as well as for the adoption of a law on judicial independence and on ensuring democratic elections.

Meanwhile the humanitarian and human rights situation in Palestine remain of [particular concern](#). On 21 May 2021, in a [joint statement](#), United Nations human rights experts condemned the forced eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah and

Silwan neighbourhoods in occupied East Jerusalem, and considered this as the spark that ignited the fuse of an all-out war. In previous reports to the UN experts, [Alkarama asked](#) the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, to urge the Israeli authorities to immediately stop the demolition of Palestinian homes.

The experts urged the commitment to a credible negotiation process aimed at achieving sustainable peace within the framework of international law and human rights, ending the occupation of Palestinian lands, forced evictions, home demolitions, arbitrary displacement, illegal population transfer and construction of illegal settlements in the occupied territories. Earlier, [the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), Michelle Bachelet, called for strict respect for international law, and for independent, transparent and thorough investigations to be conducted into all allegations of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

***State of public freedoms:
right of association,
peaceful assembly,
expression and media,
human rights defenders***

While Lebanon rejected recommendations made during its UPR review to protect the right to peaceful demonstration, the excessive use of force by state and non-state actors against protestors continued this year. On 23 February 2021, Alkarama and several Lebanese and international human rights organisations [submitted a petition](#) to the Parliament's Human Rights Committee to investigate the violations committed against Lebanese demonstrators arrested in the context of the popular protests in Tripoli.

The city experienced massive demonstrations in January 2021 against the dire economic situation and the lack of mitigation measure in the context of Covid-19 lockdown. The demonstrations were met with an excessive use of force by the state security forces which proceeded to arbitrarily arrest dozens of protesters following home raids.

Conflictual contexts make the defence of civil liberties even more difficult as illustrated by the situation of human rights defenders in Palestine. This year has shown that their work is rendered even more difficult in the context of the repression by Israeli authorities of

Palestinians from the occupied territories. In February 2021, [two UN human rights experts called on Israel to immediately stop using military security tools](#) to “obstruct the legitimate work of human rights defenders”. This call followed a decision by the Israeli military court on January 6, 2021, to convict Palestinian human rights activist Issa Amro on six counts related to his human rights activities between 2010 and 2016. According to the experts, this case is part of “a clear and systematic pattern of Israeli detention and intimidation of human rights defenders, a pattern that has recently intensified”.

This pattern is also exemplified by other cases brought forward in the past years by Alkarama to the UN human rights experts. For example, Alkarama worked on the case of [Palestinian human rights lawyer and defender Shireen Al-Issawi](#), who was detained for three and a half years, after she and her two brothers, Shadi and Medhat, were arrested in March 2014 and charged with “cooperation with actors operating against Israel”. They were released on 17 October 2017. Later, Palestinian poet and peaceful activist Dareen Tatour solely prosecuted for the exercise of her right to freedom of expression was sentenced in July 2018 to five months in prison. In its [urgent appeal](#) to the of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, Alkarama highlighted that Tatour’s

judicial harassment illustrated a growing pattern of arbitrary detentions of Palestinian due to their activity on social media. At that time and from 2015, 280 Palestinians had been **arrested** for posts or “likes” on social media. The case of Issa Amro is thus only the tip of the iceberg in a state where the Israeli army gives itself every right to silence journalists, peace activists and human rights activists.

Right to liberty and security of persons: enforced disappearances, summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention

In its **letter** to the Human Rights Committee of the Lebanese Parliament, Alkarama and other NGOs highlighted the need to ensure that detained persons are provided with access to a lawyer at the first moment of their detention in order to help them understand their rights, securing thus fair trial guarantees. **The petition** submitted to the President and members of the Human Rights Committee of the Lebanese Parliament requested that questions be put to the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Justice regarding the non-implementation of Article 47 of Law 191/2020, the continued prohibition on lawyers from attending the preliminary hearings of detainees, and the non-implementation of Law 65/2017 which criminalizes

torture.

In this regard, the letter underlines that while a reform was passed to reinforce procedural guarantees in detention with Law No. 191/2020, this legislation is not being implemented and “multiple violations have appeared in police agencies due to the absence of effective monitoring”. The civil society group also noted that although Law No. 65/2017 criminalising torture was passed in September 2017, it was yet to be put into effect as no major results have derived from it. This absence of implementation and monitoring is also illustrated by the cases brought forward by Alkarama this year.

On 29 October 2021, Alkarama sent an **urgent appeal** to the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances concerning the abduction of Danish citizen of Lebanese origin Arabi Ali Muhammad Ibrahim. Lebanese security forces had abducted Mr Arabi Ali Muhammad Ibrahim on 20 October 2021 in the Al-Mankoubin neighbourhood of Tripoli, before taking him to an unknown location, in full view of passers-by and neighbours.

The victim is the son of the former detainee, Ali Muhammad Ibrahim, a Danish national of Lebanese origin, who was arrested in Tripoli on 24 May 2007 before being held incommunicado and tortured. He was then transferred to Roumieh prison, where he remained in

solitary confinement for 5 months before being transferred on 27 October 2008 to the "B" wing of the same prison. Furthermore, it seems that the arrest of Arabi Ali Muhammad Ibrahim is a form of retaliation against his father for his peaceful activism in Denmark, against the impunity of members of the security forces responsible for his arrest and the torture he suffered in his native Lebanon.

Alkarama expressed its concern at the persistence of the practice of torture that still prevails in the country, due to the authorities' failure to comply with the recommendations of the Committee against Torture in this regard, and to the total impunity of those responsible for crimes of torture. While Arabi Ali Muhammad Ibrahim was released after 11 days of arbitrary and illegal detention, other victims of arbitrary detention did not fare so well. Alkarama recently learned of the death in prison of the young Palestinian, Yasser Al-Hassan, who died in his cell in Roumieh prison because of medical negligence leading to a heart attack, which finally led to his death after 15 years of detention and ill-treatment. Al-Hassan was arrested in the context of the events at [Nahr al-Bared camp](#), which had seen widespread human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests and arbitrary sentences handed down in unfair trials.

For the past decade, Alkarama has regularly called on experts to strongly

condemn the continuing violations of the right to liberty and physical and moral integrity by the Lebanese authorities through arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances and torture. Alkarama had previously [informed](#) the UN protection mechanisms of the situation of the [Nahr al-Bared camp](#) detainees and their conditions of detention, pointing out that under a 2007 Ministerial Council decision these detainees were to be tried by the "Justice Council". The latter, as a special court, failed to guarantee a fair trial and offered no recourse, as its decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

Violation of conventional obligations under the UN Convention against torture in Lebanon also takes the form of deportations of individuals in countries despite the risk of torture upon their arrival. On 18 January 2021, Alkarama submitted an [urgent appeal](#) on behalf of Russian citizen Viktoriya Matsakova, at risk of deportation to her country where she risked being tortured.

In Syria, after more than ten years of unabated human rights and humanitarian law violations, tens of thousands of civilians remain arbitrarily detained and subjected to enforced disappearance, torture, sexual violence, leading to innumerable deaths in detention. According to a UN Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian

Arab Republic's [report](#), “arbitrary detention and imprisonment have been deliberately instrumentalized to instil fear and suppress dissent among the civilian population”. Furthermore, the report highlights the plight of detainees, subjected to torture, cruel and inhuman treatment at the hands of all parties to the conflict. In its conclusions, the document emphasises that these practices have been carried out “with the knowledge and acquiescence of the governments who have supported the different parties to the conflict”.

FOCUS ON

PERSISTENT USE OF TORTURE AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES DENOUNCED BY THE UN

IRAQ

Since the US-led coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003, the country has been torn by civil war, internal division, as well as regional turmoil. This situation has resulted in a weak government that is unable or unwilling to combat misuse of power or to bring perpetrators of severe human rights violations to justice. Iraq has one of the highest numbers of enforced disappearances in the world with almost one million unsolved cases since the period of Saddam Hussein. Three quarters of the disappearances happened following the U.S. invasion of Iraq making it a systematic phenomenon in the country.

A [report](#) published by the United Nations Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) early august



Families of victims of enforced disappearances committed during anti-Daesh operations, Erbil, Iraq, Credit: Yunus Keles/Anadolu Agency/ Getty images.

2021 emphasized the need to prevent torture in places of detention in Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region, highlighting several issues that Alkarama had raised in recent years in this regard as part of its concerns about the human rights situation in the country. Despite the steps taken by Iraq in terms of national legislation to criminalise torture, the UN report, which was published under the title "Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq: Legal Conditions and Procedural Safeguards to Prevent Torture and Ill-treatment", shows that this practice continues in prisons in the entire country.

While enforced disappearance constitutes, in itself, a form of torture, the practice of secret detention, outside of any legal supervision creates a breeding ground for such practices. In May 2021, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED), responsible for monitoring the implementation by States of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, has urged the Iraqi government to comply with its commitments under the Convention it ratified on November 23, 2010.

The UN treaty body insisted on the obligation of the State party to cooperate by conducting full investigations into the cases of enforced disappearances of Iraqi

citizens including [Khamis Al Ghurery](#), [Majid Al Khaledi](#) and Amer Tarek Hussein Dulaimi, who disappeared following arbitrary arrests by the military. Their cases were previously brought to the attention of the CED experts by Alkarama through its urgent action procedure.

Alkarama pointed out to the attention of the UN experts that despite the ratification of the International Convention, the Iraqi State still does not respect its international commitments. The CED, therefore, invited the State party authorities to provide further information on the measures taken to search for the three citizens.

Finally, encouraging the government to periodically inform the families, relatives, and representatives of disappeared citizens of the progress of the search and investigation, the Committee stressed the importance of sanctioning any intervention by the authorities that might impede the effectiveness of the process of investigating and finding the disappeared.

These calls were again [repeated](#) in May by the CED to the Iraqi authorities by urging them to cooperate in order to locate and impartially investigate the case of the [three brothers](#), [Falih Al Janabi](#), [Salih Al Janabi](#) and

[Meshtaq Al Janabi](#), who have been missing since their arrest on September 9, 2014 at their home in Latifiya by members of the federal police and the Iraqi army. The UN body expressed concern about the lack of collaboration of the Iraqi authorities, who are generally content to accuse any missing person of belonging to a terrorist organization without providing evidence to that effect.

The experts recalled that no circumstances can be invoked to justify an enforced disappearance and that it is the responsibility of the government to investigate such disappearances, regardless of the profile of the disappeared persons, or the suspicions that may exist against them.

Later again in November 2021, the CED urged the Iraqi authorities to investigate on the fate and whereabouts of [Mr Mohammed AL DARAJI](#), who has been missing since he was abducted on 10 February 2014 from his home in the Saladin governorate (north of Baghdad), by armed members of the Saraya Al Salam militia. The Saraya Al Salam is a Shiite militia affiliated to the Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU), an organisation composed of 67 militias currently integrated into the Iraqi army. The CED recalled that the Iraqi authorities remained ultimately responsible for all acts of abduction committed by its militias and that they had the obligation to investigate all

cases of enforced disappearance on its territory, whoever the perpetrators were.

THE NILE

While the same worries about arbitrary detentions of political dissidents and other nonviolent activists, as well as their ill-treatment in imprisonment, continue in Djibouti, the situation in Sudan has worsened, particularly since the military takeover on 25 October 2021. On November 2021, the Human rights Council held a [special session](#) to address the “implications of the ongoing situation in the Republic of the Sudan”.

Before the takeover, a joint military-civilian government shared leadership within a coalition that was driving Sudan's transition to democracy after President Omar al-Bashir, who had been in power for 30 years, was ousted in April 2019. However, more than [40 people have been killed](#) by security forces in protests

following the coup. The latter affected the transition mainly in undermining confidence between the military and civilian components of the new leadership. Following the coup, the Human Rights Council called for the restoration of democratic government and the [release](#) of all those arrested during the coup.

However, Alkarama's work this year in the Nile region has focused primarily on the [systematic violations](#) of rights and freedoms that are still rampant in Egypt. While the crackdown on peaceful dissent and political opposition using repressive laws is getting only harsher, torture and denial of medical care in prisons continue to put the lives of hundreds of thousands of victims of arbitrary detention at risk.

***State of public freedoms:
right of association,
peaceful assembly,
expression and media,
human rights defenders***

While civil society's space has been shrinking, particularly as a result of emergency measures enacted in response to terrorism or the Covid-19 outbreak, the condition of journalists and human rights campaigners remains a major source of worry. In November 2021, the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) condemned the targeting of journalists perceived to be critical of the authorities by the military authorities in Sudan, particularly after the coup. According to cases documented to the UN, journalists were “arbitrarily arrested, attacked while reporting, and had their homes and offices raided by security forces”, while others reported of “their attempted abduction by armed assailants in plain clothes”.

In her [address](#) on the situation in Sudan, the UN High Commissioner also denounced the indiscriminate use of force against peaceful protesters that led to dozens of deaths. The killings of peaceful demonstrators emphasised one of the main concerns [expressed](#) by Alkarama, i.e. the absolute necessity of a thorough reform process of its security sector still marred by a long-standing regime of impunity and abuse. Considering the ongoing abuses

perpetrated against protesters, journalists and other peaceful activists, significant improvements are essential to finally meet popular demands for freedom, peace, and justice.

Similarly to 2020, violations against journalists all thorough the region increased again this year. Journalists in Egypt have been experiencing an ever-growing systematic crackdown since Marshal Abdel Fattah Al-Sissi came to power and many of them remain behind bars. For the past years, Alkarama documented and followed the situation of many of them including a [group of nine journalists](#) subjected to enforced disappearance, torture and lengthy periods of arbitrary detention in inhumane conditions for having covered the Raba'a sit-in and massacre. Accused of spreading false rumours accusing the authorities of using excessive force and violating human rights during the violent dispersal by the army and security forces of sit-ins in Rab'a and al-Nahda squares in Cairo on 16 August 2013, their case has led to several UN [public calls and recommendations](#), expressing deep concern about the state of freedom of expression in Egypt. In spite of these repeated calls to stop the repression of peaceful critics, this practice [continued unabated](#).

In July 2021, a UN expert has [deplored](#) the continuing large-scale arrests and prolonged pre-trial detentions of

human rights defenders in Egypt, claiming that activists were being held without arrest warrants, held incommunicado and then charged with multiple sham crimes.

Violations of civil and political rights in Egypt have been one of Alkarama's main concerns for the past decade and a half, but the pace of repression and abuse has intensified since General Abdel Fattah Al-Sissi came to power following the military coup of 3 July 2013. [The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#) had previously expressed her dissatisfaction in January 2021 with “the misuse of anti-terrorism and national security laws to criminalise the work of human rights defenders in the country”. The UN expert condemned the arrest of human rights defenders and bloggers, prolonged pre-trial detentions, and charges of belonging to a terrorist organisation, as well as Egypt's continued practice of intimidation and criminalisation of human rights defenders, journalists, and their families.

Right to liberty and security of persons: enforced disappearances, summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention

In November 2021, ahead of demonstrations against the military coup in Sudan, the High Commissioner

called on the authorities “to release immediately all individuals who remain arbitrarily detained since the 25 October coup, most of whom have been held incommunicado”. Among those targeted by arbitrary arrest, secret detention and ill-treatment, the UN Human Rights Office in Sudan had then documented the arrest of 57 people, “including Government officials, political and civil society actors, human rights defenders and journalists”.

Over the past ten years, Alkarama has monitored the alarming and appalling deterioration of the conditions of detention in Egypt through individual complaints [reports](#) to the UN human mechanisms. Reports highlighted the systematic practice of arbitrary detention and torture, and the prevalence of enforced disappearance. Furthermore, cases and reports shed light on the flawed 2015 anti-terrorism law used in the systematic repression of human rights activists, journalists, and peaceful dissidents. Alkarama expressed concern that Egypt has not ratified the [International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance](#), the [Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) which allow for individual complaints to the Human Rights Committee.

One of the [main issue](#) in Egypt remains the misuse of counter-terrorism measures against civil society activists,

lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders. In December 2021, several UN human rights experts [called](#) on Egypt to halt this practice and immediately release those arbitrarily detained, citing the cases of blogger Alaa Abd El Fattah, lawyer and human rights defender Mohammed El-Baquer, and journalist Mohammed Ibrahim Radwan. Like thousands of others peaceful activists, the latter were charged under vague offences such as “spreading false news likely to pose a threat to national security”. These examples also highlight a significant concern voiced by Alkarama on several occasions, namely the use of indefinite pre-trial custody as a form of punishment against nonviolent campaigners and human rights advocates. The three peaceful activists continue to be held arbitrarily under new or renewed pre-trial detention orders, a strategy routinely used by prosecutorial authorities in Egypt to escape the two-year’s time limit set by the Criminal Procedure Code.

The denial of medical care is often used as a form of punishment against arbitrarily detained journalist and human rights defenders. Such is the case of [Alia Awad](#), an Egyptian photographer and journalist, who has been arbitrarily detained in prison for nearly five years, and has been banned from receiving visits for nearly a year. She faces imminent risks on her life due to the refusal from the authorities to

provide with adequate medical care to treat a uterine tumour and other illnesses –resulting in a serious deterioration of her health. This year again, Alkarama has requested the intervention of UN experts to call on the Egyptian authorities to immediately release Alia Awad and at the very least to provide her with appropriate treatment.

FOCUS ON

DEATH SENTENCES FOR OPPONENTS EIGHT YEARS AFTER THE RABAA MASSACRE

EGYPT

While 25 January 2021 marked the [tenth anniversary](#) of the Egyptian revolution, gatherings were strictly forbidden and streets emptied from any form of commemoration of the revolution, due to the strict security measures implemented all thorough the country. In this context strikingly illustrating the return to an even harsher form of dictatorship since the military coup, Alkarama highlighted the situation of those who participated or covered the Rabaa al-Adawiya sit-in of August 2013. Through their case, Alkarama shed light on the use of the death penalty as a means of repressing political dissent under Sissi's authority.

In June 2021, Alkarama [expresses its shock and deep concern](#) regarding the Egyptian Court of Cassation's decision



The Egyptian Court of Cassation issued a final ruling on 14 June 2021 in the case of the dispersal of the Rabaa sit-in, upholding the death penalty sentence against 12 of the accused.

on the death sentences handed down onto 12 leaders of the "Muslim Brotherhood" group in Egypt, arrested in the Rabaa sit-in case in 2013. They were sentenced following trials lacking essential guarantees of justice and after prolonged arbitrary detention. [Alkarama has followed this case closely](#) and has submitted several procedures at the UN level.



Leaders of the Muslim brotherhood party were sentenced to death for their participation in the Raba'a sit-in.

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It was on 14 June 2021, that the Court of Cassation confirmed the death sentences of 12 of the defendants, including Safiat Hegazy, Mohamed El Beltagy Eissam El-Aryan and Abdel Rahman al-Bar, while commuting the death sentences of 31 others to life imprisonment. Alkarama highlighted that while political opponents were arbitrarily tried and convicted in what was described by UN independent human rights experts as a [mockery of justice](#), no proper investigation has

been carried out into the killings of protesters by security officials in Rabaa and Al-Nahda squares.

Alkarama highlighted to UN experts that while the political opponents were collectively for the death of several police officers during the dispersal of the Rab'a and al-Nahda sit-ins on 14 August 2013, no official has been investigated on the mass killing of the more than 1,000 protesters. At that time, [Alkarama filed a complaint](#) with the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions regarding the killing of 985 protesters by the army and security forces during the authorities' dispersal of the sit-in in Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square, noting that the army and police forces used live ammunition at the time and fired indiscriminately and intensely with the aim of killing, without any direct threat from the protesters.



Former Governor Dr Hossam Abu al-Ezz is subjected to a slow death in Egypt's Scorpio Prison.

Watch video

Alkarama has repeatedly warned of the [dangers of impunity](#) for the killings of protesters, arbitrary arrests and torture in Egypt, while [UN bodies](#) have demanded that those responsible for the killings of protesters be held accountable, to no avail.

A testament to the political nature of the trial and sentences, Dr. Elissam Al-Aryan who [died in detention](#) in August 2020 due to ill-treatment and denial of medical care was also among those whose death sentences was upheld by the Court of Cassation's ruling of June 2021.