



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 5 JULY 2021

FEARS GROW FOR VANISHED SAUDI ROYAL MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

**INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY URGED TO ACT GIVEN IMMEDIATE RISK TO LIFE OF PRINCESS
BASMAH AND HER DAUGHTER, SUHOUD**

London, UK – today, 5 July 2021, representatives of the family of Princess Basmah bint Saud bin Abdulaziz al Saud, daughter of the late King Saud of Saudi Arabia, and her daughter, Suhoud bint Shua Al-Sharif, have called upon United Nations experts and the international community to intervene and request proof of life amid serious concerns that their lives are in danger.

Princess Basmah and her daughter were arrested in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on 1 March 2019. Since their arrest they have been arbitrarily detained without charge; without access to necessary medical treatment; and without access to independent legal advice and assistance.

On 17 May 2021, over a year since the family had last had any form of communication from Princess Basmah, she was permitted to a call to her son. However, the call was abruptly cut when Princess Basmah started discussing her will. No family members have heard from, or been able to reach, Princess Basmah and Suhoud in the seven weeks since that call.

Today, seven weeks since the last contact on 17 May 2021, an urgent appeal has been filed on behalf of the family with United Nations experts at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, calling for urgent action to be taken. The appeal has been filed by **Grant Liberty**, a specialist non-profit organisation based in London which works with prisoners of conscience in Saudi Arabia, and an international counsel team at **Doughty Street Chambers**.

Background

At the time of their arrest in March 2019, Princess Basmah was preparing to travel by air ambulance to Geneva, Switzerland, for her medical treatment. She had sought permission from the Saudi authorities to leave the country, and had hired a firm to make the necessary arrangements for her and her daughter.

As far as the family are able to confirm, Princess Basmah and Suhoud are being detained incommunicado in Al Ha'ir Prison, Riyadh. Other than the short call on 17 May 2021, they have had no communication with their family since April 2020, when all communications were abruptly cut. The

sudden cut in communication in April 2020 coincided with a tweet sent from Princess Basmah's twitter account, one year since her arrest in March 2019, revealing that she was arbitrarily detained in prison and appealing to King Salman and to the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for mercy.

It also coincided with a [joint communication](#) sent by UN experts to Saudi Arabia on 6 April 2020 expressing serious concern that Princess Basmah and Suhoud were arbitrarily detained, denied their rights to a fair trial and to freedom of expression, and that Princess Basmah was being denied appropriate and continuous medical treatment. [Saudi Arabia's later response \(June 2020\)](#) to the UN experts merely stated that Princess Basmah and Suhoud have been accused of criminal offences, and outlined the applicable domestic criminal procedure law. The response failed to directly address the UN experts' concerns or to explain why, contrary to the domestic law outlined in its response, Princess Basmah and Suhoud continue to be detained without charge, beyond the maximum 180-day period, and without judicial review of their detention.

Today's Urgent Appeal

After two years of attempts to secure Princess Basmah and Suhoud's release, and in light of this recent development that raises serious concerns regarding risk to life, the family has now instructed Grant Liberty and an international legal team, barristers Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC and Tatyana Eatwell, to act in the interests of Princess Basmah and her daughter.

Grant Liberty and the international legal team have now filed an urgent appeal with the UN Human Rights Council's Special Procedures Mechanisms. The legal submissions filed today state, "*There are real and serious concerns that Princess Basmah and Suhoud are arbitrarily detained, in circumstances that present a serious risk to life, have been denied their right to a fair trial, and that their treatment may amount to torture and ill treatment, contrary to international law.*" They urge the UN experts to take action, given the imminent risk to life and serious concerns for the women's physical and mental well-being.

Countries with Embassies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including the United Kingdom, are also being urged by the family's representatives to raise concerns with the Saudi authorities and to request proof of life.

Speaking about today's urgent action, **Lucy Rae, PR Director** of Grant Liberty, said:

"In Saudi Arabia today, many activists and human rights defenders are languishing in jail simply for the crime of wanting a better world. They have been tortured, forced into hunger strikes and held in solitary confinement for months on end. Princess Basmah and her daughter appear to have joined their number and been targeted due to speaking out against the Crown Prince, Mohamed Bin Salman. The United Nations and the international community must now protect these two brave women and end their suffering."

Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC stated:

"When journalist Jamal Khashoggi was brutally murdered in 2018, Saudi Arabia initially denied any knowledge of his fate and claimed they had 'nothing to hide.' The grim truth, when it eventually emerged, was very different. In this case, Saudi Arabia has also claimed it has nothing to hide. However, it has now been seven long weeks since the family received an alarming telephone call in which Princess Basmah was contemplating her own death and discussing arrangements for her will, before the line was cut. No one has heard from her or her daughter since. This abrupt cut in communication, followed by a further period of

incommunicado detention, raises fears that our clients have been forcibly disappeared, and that their lives may be in immediate danger.

The international community must wait no longer to ascertain whether Princess Basmah and her daughter are alive, safe and secure. Saudi Arabia must provide proof of life immediately. If our clients are safe and well, their arbitrary detention must end and they must be released forthwith.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The family is being represented in this matter by Grant Liberty. The family ask for privacy at this time. For any media queries, please contact **Rhianna Dorrian** at office@grantliberty.org.
2. Princess Basmah bint Saud bin Abdulaziz al Saud is a daughter of the late King Saud of Saudi Arabia, and the youngest of his 115 children. She is aged 57. She is a humanitarian, businesswoman and journalist, and she has actively campaigned for reform in Saudi Arabia, particularly on women’s rights issues.
3. Grant Liberty is a London-based non-profit organisation which aims to stand and fight for human rights worldwide. Grant Liberty is the official advocacy wing of Forgotten Women, a global voice for those who have been silenced. More details are available at www.grantliberty.org.