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Waleed Mohammed Al Smani
Minister of Justice
Postal Code 11472
P.O. Box 7775
Riyadh
Saudi Arabia

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Your Excellency,

**I am distressed to learn that 30-year-old fitness instructor and women’s rights activist Manahel al-Otaibi is being subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in al-Malaz Prison**. After a one-month period of renewed incommunicado detention, Manahel al-Otaibi was able to contact her family and she alleged she had been held in solitary confinement for a full month and subject to beatings by prison guards and fellow prisoners. She also told her family that she was forced to clean toilets, and that although she was released from solitary confinement to contact them, prison authorities had threatened that they would be sending her back.

On 9 January 2024, the Specialized Criminal Court sentenced Manahel al-Otaibi to eleven years in prison for «terrorist offences» after a secret trial where she was found guilty under articles 43 and 44 of the Kingdom’s Law for Combatting Terrorism and its Financing. Manahel al-Otaibi’s family have not had access to her court documents, or the evidence presented against her.

Manahel al-Otaibi was arrested on 16 November 2022 and charged with violating the Anti-Cyber Crime Law for tweeting hashtags in support of women’s rights and posting photos on Snapchat of herself at the mall wearing «immodest» clothing. Her case was first heard by the Criminal Court in Riyadh on 23 January 2023 who referred her to the Specialized Criminal Court. According to court documents reviewed by Amnesty International, Manahel al-Otaibi was charged with «publishing and spreading content that contains committing public sins and inciting individuals and girls in society to renounce religious principles and social values and to violate public order and public morals on her Twitter account», in violation of the Anti-Cybercrime Law. The charges against her are based on her social media posts which were «opposed to regulations and laws that relate to women», including through calling to #EndMaleGuardianship.

Saudi authorities forcibly disappeared Manahel al-Otaibi between 5 November 2023 and 14 April 2024. On 14 April 2024, after a period more than five months of enforced disappearance, she called her family to inform them that she was being held in solitary confinement in al-Malaz Prison with a broken leg after being brutally beaten, and without access to medical care.

Her sister Fawzia al-Otaibi told Amnesty International that she believes the only reason Manahel al-Otaibi was finally permitted a phone call was in order to convey a message to her family to stop being publicly outspoken about her imprisonment.

**I urge you to order the immediate and unconditional release of Manahel al-Otaibi, as she has been convicted solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression. Pending her release, she must be granted immediate access to medical care, and her allegations of torture and other ill-treatment must be impartially investigated.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

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