

**Kidnapping and Torture Victim Abdulrahman Al-Sadhan and Sister,
U.S. Citizen Areej Al-Sadhan, File Federal Racketeering Lawsuit Against
Twitter and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Alleging Criminal
Enterprise of Transnational Repression**

*Complaint alleges criminal enterprise uses surveillance, murder, kidnapping,
torture, bribery, extortion and intimidation to silence
its critics in the U.S. and internationally*

New York, NY, May 16, 2023 — Today, Walden Macht & Haran, on behalf of plaintiffs **Abdulrahman Al-Sadhan** and **Areej Al-Sadhan**, filed a federal lawsuit against **Twitter, Inc.**, the **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**, **Saud Al-Qahtani**, **Ahmad Abouammo**, **Ali Alzabarah**, **Ahmed Almutairi**, **Bader Al-Asaker** and the **Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission**. The complaint alleges that the defendants are members of a racketeering enterprise that seeks to extend the authoritarian control of Saudi Arabia beyond its borders and silence its critics through acts of transnational repression on U.S. and international soil. The lawsuit alleges that members of this “Saudi Criminal Enterprise” unlawfully surveilled, killed, tortured, disappeared, kidnapped, extorted and threatened perceived dissidents to silence their speech and to export its terror, repression and control to the United States.

Victims of the enterprise encompass numerous critics of Saudi Arabia, including the plaintiff, Abdulrahman Al-Sadhan, who was kidnapped, imprisoned and tortured after being targeted by the enterprise through illegal infiltration of Twitter’s confidential user data, procured by two of Twitter’s own employees, defendants Abouammo and Alzabarah. In December 2022, Abouammo was convicted in federal court of acting as a foreign agent without notice to the Attorney General, conspiracy, wire fraud, international money laundering and falsification of records, while Alzabarah fled to Saudi Arabia to evade prosecution. These agents were recruited by Almutairi and Al-Asaker to supply the data to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the purpose of silencing, kidnapping, torturing, imprisoning and killing its critics. In total, the enterprise unlawfully accessed and transmitted confidential Twitter user data more than 30,000 times, according to evidence introduced by federal prosecutors at Abouammo’s trial. Abdulrahman’s name was among thousands of pieces of personally identifiable information transmitted from Twitter to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Soon after, he was targeted and disappeared by the racketeering enterprise.

After Abdulrahman vanished, his sister Areej Al-Sadhan spoke out against Saudi Arabia, calling for his release and safe return home. Yet, once her advocacy brought international attention to Abdulrahman’s arbitrary detention, the enterprise began to stalk, harass and

issue death threats to Areej herself—to silence her and deny her constitutional right to free speech. The suit alleges that Areej and Abdulrahman have endured immense harm at the direction of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which continues to hold Abdulrahman hostage, lording its control to keep both him and his sister quiet.

Among notable alleged co-conspirators is Mohammed bin Salman, Prime Minister and Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, who allegedly directed his co-conspirators to access confidential Twitter account data of users critical of his regime, and, according to the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, approved the “operation in Istanbul, Turkey to capture or kill Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.”

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act (RICO) and the Alien Tort Statute by Andrea J. Prasow of The Freedom Initiative, a Washington DC-based non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for prisoners wrongfully detained in the Middle East and North Africa, with **Jim Walden, Avni P. Patel, Deanna Paul, Peter A. Devlin** and **Catherine Weiss** of **Walden Macht & Haran LLP** and **Marc Van Der Hout** and **Johnny Sinodis** of **Van Der Hout LLP**.

The lawsuit details how the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia used its commercial relationship with **Twitter** to advance the enterprise scheme of crushing dissent and disappearing government critics. It also alleges that Twitter enabled its co-conspirators to commit acts of transnational repression, and even permitted the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to enjoy an equity stake in Twitter itself.

Walden, the lawyer for the plaintiffs, says, “It is unfortunate that Abdulrahman and his sister Areej, a U.S. citizen, must resort to courts to seek redress from the utter failure of U.S. policy, which has failed to hold human rights abusers to account for their flagrant acts of transnational repression. As long as we lay idle while the rights of Americans and their families are trampled, authoritarian regimes like Saudi Arabia will continue to penetrate U.S. business and to use them as weapons for their criminality. We look forward to holding Twitter and the Saudi regime to account.”

Patel, co-counsel for the Al -Sadhans, says, “Transnational repression is a devastating reality, one that is growing with the expansion of technology. Right now, foreign governments, complicit with U.S. corporations, are targeting U.S. persons on U.S. soil. With this lawsuit, we underscore the need for victims like Abdulrahman and Areej to have a clear path within our country’s judicial system to seek relief for the unimaginable violation of their rights.”

Sinodis, co-counsel for the plaintiffs, says, “The egregious invasion of privacy and suffering that underlie this lawsuit are a stark reminder of the perils of speaking truth to power.

People like Abdulrahman and Areej, who call out injustice and oppression, must be supported and protected at all costs. This litigation seeks to do just that, while also holding accountable those responsible for the horrendous acts against both of them."

The complaint also states that the **Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission** (SACM), a U.S.-based entity headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia, is a tool the Saudi government uses to surveil, stalk and harass dissidents in the United States, and that it encourages scholarship students to target and harass other U.S.-based Saudi students who criticize Saudi Arabia. Defendant Alzabarah was a recipient of a SACM scholarship before he worked at Twitter.

The lawsuit seeks a trial by jury.

Andrea J. Prasow, Executive Director of the Freedom Initiative, says, "The Saudi regime not only engages in serious human rights abuses at home, it extends those abuses outside its borders, including here in the U.S. When the U.S. refuses to hold Saudi abusers accountable politically, opting for high-level fist bumps instead, people like Areej and Abdulrahman are left unprotected as the Saudi regime commits human rights violations in Saudi Arabia and around the world with no consequences." She continues, "Abdulrahman was kidnapped, tortured and remains in unlawful detention—crimes that violate U.S. law and for which there must be a remedy. It shouldn't require a federal lawsuit for a U.S. citizen to protect herself from Saudi Arabia's thugs, but Areej has been left with no other options. We hope U.S. courts can provide them both with some measure of justice and protection that is sadly unavailable elsewhere."

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