# British man faces trial in Riyadh amid UK-Saudi economic talks



As British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman prepare for a significant meeting in Riyadh centred on economic ties, one British national finds himself facing a troubling legal predicament that echoes broader concerns about human rights in the region. Ahmed al-Doush, a Manchester-based father of four, is scheduled to appear in a Riyadh court, where he faces the possibility of an extended prison sentence due to a deleted tweet and alleged associations with a Saudi dissident. This case raises alarming questions about due process and the treatment of foreign nationals within the Saudi legal system.

The UK Foreign Office has not yet been granted access to the trial, leaving al-Doush's British legal representatives struggling to understand both the charges against him and the nature of the proceedings. Haydee Dijkstal, an international counsel for al-Doush, emphasised the significant legal oversights, stating, "Under international law, a detained person has the right to be promptly informed of both the reasons for arrest and continued detention and of the charges." The lack of transparency in this case not only contravenes fundamental principles of due process, but also aligns with the troubling pattern of governmental suppression of free speech that has emerged in Saudi Arabia.

Al-Doush's situation is compounded by severe restrictions placed on communication with his family. Prison authorities have reportedly denied him the ability to discuss his case with loved ones, exacerbating the distress experienced by his wife, Amaher Nour, who is concerned for her husband and the wellbeing of their children. The last few months have been particularly agonising for the family, as al-Doush was not permitted to communicate with his wife even on the day of their child's birth—a moment that was not only significant personally but also indicative of the isolation and inhumane conditions often reported by those detained in Saudi Arabia.

Human rights organisations including Amnesty International have condemned al-Doush's detention, highlighting the use of severe anti-terrorism and cybercrime laws in Saudi Arabia to target dissent and stifle free expression. Amnesty's statements underline that charges brought against him revolve around a social media post pertaining to the conflict in Sudan, which many experts believe does not warrant such harsh legal repercussions. Despite the Saudi government’s lack of transparency around his case, this incident underscores the risks faced by individuals who engage in even seemingly innocuous commentary online, particularly in a nation where government control over social media and public discourse is pervasive.

Conversations between UK officials and their Saudi counterparts have continued, yet the Foreign Office maintains a stance of non-interference in Saudi Arabia’s legal processes. A recent letter from a Foreign Office official admitted to the distress of al-Doush’s family, confirming that they have raised concerns regarding his treatment with Saudi authorities. Nonetheless, this passive approach raises questions about the effectiveness of diplomatic engagement in securing the rights and wellbeing of British citizens abroad.

As al-Doush awaits his court appearance, his case embodies the precarious balance between international relations and human rights advocacy. It highlights a growing unease regarding the treatment of foreign nationals in authoritarian regimes, where legal protection often becomes secondary to political considerations. As the diplomatic handshake between the UK and Saudi Arabia looms, the potential fallout of this case brings to light the moral obligations of governments to protect their citizens, even amidst complex geopolitical dynamics.

In the coming days, as Ahmed al-Doush appears in court, observers will keenly watch for any emerging details regarding the charges against him, the conduct of his trial, and, crucially, whether the broader implications for human rights and free speech in Saudi Arabia will ring clear amidst the praise for economic partnerships.

### Reference Map

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## Bibliography

* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/11/briton-faces-threat-of-extended-saudi-prison-sentence-for-tweet> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.ft.com/content/6beb0f86-6100-4361-b629-2894c2a74820> - This article reports on the case of Ahmed al-Doush, a British business analyst detained in Saudi Arabia since August 2024. He faces charges under severe terrorism and anti-cyber crime laws for a deleted social media post and alleged association with a Saudi dissident. His trial is expected to conclude in April 2025, with a judgment imminent. Amnesty International and other human rights groups have condemned his detention, calling for his release. The UK Foreign Office is in contact with his family and the local authorities. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/6beb0f86-6100-4361-b629-2894c2a74820?utm_source=openai))
* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/06/foreign-office-refused-to-give-us-details-about-briton-jailed-in-saudi-family-say> - This article details the case of Ahmed al-Doush, a British national detained in Saudi Arabia without charge for over four months. His family alleges that the UK Foreign Office refused to provide information about his situation to his pregnant wife. Doush was arrested on August 31, 2024, and has been denied access to a lawyer in Saudi Arabia. During his detention, his wife gave birth to their fourth child, and he was not allowed to speak to her on the day of the birth. The Foreign Office stated they are supporting Doush and are in contact with his family and the local authorities. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/06/foreign-office-refused-to-give-us-details-about-briton-jailed-in-saudi-family-say?utm_source=openai))
* <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/british-business-analyst-arbitrarily-detained> - Amnesty International reports on the arbitrary detention of Ahmed al-Doush, a British business analyst arrested in Saudi Arabia on August 31, 2024. He was held incommunicado and reportedly in solitary confinement for 33 days, denied UK consular assistance and legal representation for over two months. The charges against him are related to a deleted social media post and alleged association with a Saudi critic in exile. Despite a trial session, the evidence against him remains unclear, and he remains arbitrarily detained more than six months later. ([amnesty.org.uk](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/british-business-analyst-arbitrarily-detained?utm_source=openai))
* <https://taj-rights.org/uk-government-silence-deepens-the-ordeal-of-british-citizen-arbitrarily-detained-in-saudi-arabia/> - This article discusses the case of Ahmed al-Doush, a British citizen arbitrarily detained in Saudi Arabia since August 31, 2024. He was arrested without charge while returning to the UK after a family visit. His family reports that he was interrogated about a low-profile tweet concerning Sudan and alleged ties to the son of a Saudi opposition figure. During his detention, he was denied contact with his family and legal counsel, and even on the day his wife gave birth to their fourth child, he was not allowed to speak with her. The UK government's response has been notably passive, citing data protection laws as a reason for withholding information about Ahmed's condition. ([taj-rights.org](https://taj-rights.org/uk-government-silence-deepens-the-ordeal-of-british-citizen-arbitrarily-detained-in-saudi-arabia/?utm_source=openai))
* <https://sanad.uk/2025/03/04/details-of-the-detention-of-british-citizen-ahmed-al-doush-in-saudi-arabia-without-charges-since-august/> - This article provides details on the detention of Ahmed al-Doush, a British citizen arrested in Saudi Arabia on August 31, 2024, without formal charges. He was detained at Riyadh Airport while preparing to return to the UK after a family visit. For over two and a half months, his family received no information about his whereabouts or the reasons for his detention. His family and legal team affirm that he is neither a political nor human rights activist but a dedicated professional and family man. His interrogations reportedly revolved around a low-profile tweet about the situation in Sudan and alleged ties to the son of a Saudi opposition figure. A formal complaint about his treatment was submitted to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, arguing that he had been denied his right to a fair trial. ([sanad.uk](https://sanad.uk/2025/03/04/details-of-the-detention-of-british-citizen-ahmed-al-doush-in-saudi-arabia-without-charges-since-august/?utm_source=openai))
* <https://amnesty.ca/urgent-actions/saudi-arabia-free-arbitrarily-detained-british-analyst/> - Amnesty International Canada reports on the case of Ahmed al-Doush, a British national arrested in Saudi Arabia on August 31, 2024. He was held incommunicado and reportedly in solitary confinement for 33 days, denied UK consular assistance and legal representation for over two months. The charges against him are related to a deleted social media post and alleged association with a Saudi critic in exile. Despite a trial session, the evidence against him remains unclear, and he remains arbitrarily detained more than six months later. ([amnesty.ca](https://amnesty.ca/urgent-actions/saudi-arabia-free-arbitrarily-detained-british-analyst/?utm_source=openai))