



# The Center for Democracy & Human Rights in Saudi Arabia

## Biography – Ali H. Alyami

Director & Founder

### Background/Summary

Dr. Alyami is a native of Saudi Arabia and resident of the United States for the past thirty-seven years. From an early age, he has been advocating for political, economic, and social reform in his native homeland. Openly critical of the mismanagement of the nation's wealth, oppression of women and minorities, and the lack of developing, modern national institutions, he has earned the scorn of the Saudi ruling family.

Dr. Alyami is the founder and Executive Director of the Center for Democracy & Human Rights in Saudi Arabia, a Washington, D.C. based non-profit organization. Previously, he was a Senior Fellow at the Saudi Institute in Washington, D.C., Director of an educational peace program for the American Friends Service Committee in San Francisco, and a Representative for the Arab Organization for Human Rights (a Cairo based group) in North America.

Dr. Alyami has spoken at conferences throughout the U.S., Egypt, Sudan, Israel, and London, has offered expert testimony before Congress, and has advised senior officials at the Pentagon, National Security Counsel, and Department of State.

He has organized and participated in conferences around the Arab-Israeli conflict and facilitated dialogue and reconciliation between Arabs, Jews and Israelis for eight years. He also worked with non-governmental organizations against death squads and dictatorships in Latin America and anti-apartheid coalitions in the 1980s and 1990s.

### Experience

#### **Center for Democracy & Human Rights in Saudi Arabia, Founder and Executive Director, Washington, D.C. (2004 – present)**

Founded The Center to promote a peaceful transition to democracy in Saudi Arabia; Educates interested populations regarding political and social situation in Saudi Arabia; Advises government officials and policy makers; Speaks at conferences; Supports Saudi political reformers and journalists.

#### **Saudi Institute, Senior Fellow, Washington, D.C. (2003 – 2004)**

Appeared before media; Met with counterparts in other NGOs; Briefed government officials regarding Saudi policies; wrote grants, organized a conference and presented a paper at the conference “Impediment to democratic process”.

#### **Arab Organization for Human Rights Representative in North America San Francisco (1990-1996)**

Spokesperson for this Cairo-based group in United States; Represented the Organization to the public and media; Recruited support and members.

## **American Friends Service Committee Director Peace Program San Francisco (1977 – 1983)**

Organized conferences & workshops on the Arab-Israeli conflict; Promoted peace, reconciliation, and dialogue between Arabs & Israelis; Wrote two primers about Human Rights in Saudi Arabia and Arab-Israeli reconciliation.

## **Other Experience**

From 1972 on, has worked with and been affiliated with Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Catholic Archdiocese on Social Justice, Anti-Apartheid Coalitions, Inter-faith groups in San Francisco and Oakland, and NGOs against death squads and dictatorships in Latin America. This work consisted of participating in and organizing peaceful demonstrations and conferences, liaising with media, strategizing within the organizations, and meeting with U.S. officials to discuss U.S. policy.

## **Conferences/Testimony/ Interviews**

Washington, D.C., Freedom House

“Alternative Political Structures for Saudi Arabia” February 2005

Washington, D.C., Hudson Institute

“New Political Structure for Saudi Arabia” July 2004

(Covered live by C-SPAN TV and Radio)

London, England, Kofa Gallery

“Changing of Ownership” 2004

London, England, the House of Lords

“The Future of Democracy in Saudi Arabia” January 2003

Washington, D.C., Congressional Human Rights Caucus

“Human Rights in Saudi Arabia” June 2002

Khartoum, Sudan, Arab Organization for Human Rights

“Human Rights in Saudi Arabia” 1996

Cairo, Egypt, Arab Organization for Human Rights

“Human Rights in Saudi Arabia” 1996

Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

“Violations of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia” 1983

Tel Aviv, Israel, “The Two State Solution” 1979

San Francisco, California, World Affairs Council.

## **Writings**

Doctoral thesis “The Impact of Modernization on the Stability of the Saudi Monarchy” 1977

Masters thesis “Will Saudi Oil be used to Bring Peace in the Middle East?” 1984

Two primers (1977-1983 American Friends Service Committee)  
US & the Arab-Israeli Conflict  
Violation of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia

Articles & Op-eds in Washington Post, San Francisco Chronicle, Contra Costa Times, Oakland Tribune, West County Times, National Post (Canada), London Sunday Times, Al-Ahram Weekly, Weekly Standard, CNS News, Asia Times, Pakistan Daily Times

## **TV & Radio**

Interviewed on KRON-NBC, KPIX-CBS, KABC-ABC (San Francisco); KTBU-Fox (Oakland); Canadian Broadcasting Company; British Broadcasting Company, CNN International, London 2003. BBC Radio, English program 2003, frequent appearances on all major Arab media outlets, BBC Counter Point, CNN

## **Memberships & Affiliations**

World Affairs Council, San Francisco, Member

Amnesty International, San Francisco, Member

Human Rights Watch, San Francisco, Member

Middle East book & discussion club, UC Berkeley, California, Participant (1998-2003)

Arab Cultural Center, San Francisco, Member

Ethnic & Cultural Center, Contra Costa College, California, Founder/Co-Director (1968-71)

International Students Association, Claremont Graduate University, California, President

Windrush Middle School, El Cerrito, California, Board Member

Kensington Rotary Club, California, Co-Founder

## **Education**

Claremont Graduate University, California (1974 – 1977)  
Ph.D., in Government and Diplomacy

California State University, Los Angeles (1973 – 1974)  
Masters, International Relations

California State University, Hayward (1971 – 1973)  
B.A., Political Science  
Contra Costa College, San Pablo, California (1968 – 1971)  
A.A., Mechanical Engineering/ Social Science

Temple University, Pennsylvania (1967 – 1968)  
G.E.D.

## **Personal**

Dr. Alyami was born and raised in Najran, Southwest Saudi Arabia. He left his semi-nomadic upbringing at an early age, and like many young Saudis, went to the Eastern region of the country to seek employment in the oil

industry. He was hired by the Arabian American Oil Company, “Aramco”, at the age of ten and stayed in its employment for more than thirteen years. Having earned a scholarship to study in the States, Dr. Alyami pursued his bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees in the U.S. mostly on his own.

Dr. Alyami married in California and was blessed with two children. One of his two offspring is 23-year old 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Siraj Alyami, serving in the U.S. Army, stationed in California, and the other is Norah Alyami, a third-year student at an East Coast University. Both are members of the Board of Directors of the Center for Democracy & Human Rights in Saudi Arabia.