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## **Lawyers of Saudi Guantanamo Detainees Join the National Human Rights Association**

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March 25, 2006

Riyadh , Asharq Al-Awsat- Saudi lawyers who make up the defense team for the Saudi Guantanamo detainees have become associate members of non-governmental organization, the National Human Rights Association in Saudi Arabia, Dr Bandar Al-Hajjar, chairman of the association confirmed. During the first meeting with the associate members in Riyadh, Dr Al-Hajjar said that the association would look at the cases of the Guantanamo detainees from two angles.

The first would be from a legal angle, which would involve appointing American lawyers to defend the detainees, and the second would be from a media angle that would seek to address the American president and human rights organizations in the United States. Dr Al-Hajjar added that the association wants Saudi detainees to be able to appoint their own lawyers and not to be tried before military courts. The association is currently dealing with approximately 5600 cases, 70% of which have been completed. Domestic violence makes up over 30% of these cases.

Asked if there was any conflict with the Committee for Human Rights in Saudi Arabia, Dr Al-Hajjar stated that cooperation takes place with the committee and that the two organizations complement each other's work. The committee is dedicated to implementing the laws that exist. In addition, the committee does not get involved in cases until concerned individuals have had no success with the relevant authorities.

Dr Muflih Al-Qahtani, the association's vice chairman who heads the follow-up committee told Asharq Al-Awsat that the association seeks to codify the Tazeer punishments (punishments that are left to the discretion of the judge). Association members met and raised this issue with the Saudi justice minister and the chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, adding that there is a committee within the ministry of justice that specifies in the study of the codifying of these regulations.

Dr Muflih Al-Qahtani stated that there are five permanent committees and several subcommittees within the association.

The first meeting of the 35 associate members, only half of which attended, focused on the rights of members and made proposals concerning the association's future.

Dr Saleh Al-Khathlan of the National Human Rights Association previously told Asharq Al-Awsat that the organization has addressed the US Embassy in Saudi Arabia and put forward a request to visit the Saudi detainees, however to no avail.