

## October 4, 2006: Saudi Arabia: Briefing on the Current Status of Human Rights and Reform - A First Hand Account

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 4, 2006

Contact:

Angela Stephens, Assistant Communications Director,

(202) 523-3240, ext. 14 Please join us for a briefing by Ibrahim al-Mugaiteeb, president of Human Rights First Society, the only independent group in Saudi Arabia that monitors human rights. Mr. al-Mugaiteeb will speak about the current situation of human rights in Saudi Arabia and comment on whether or not the Saudi government is committed to genuine political reforms. The most recent 2006 State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices concludes that the Saudi government's human rights record "remained poor overall with continuing serious problems." The U.S.

Commission on International Religious Freedom also finds that the Saudi government continues to engage in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Ibrahim al-Mugaiteeb is a leading human rights activist and the president and founder of Human Rights First Society in Saudi Arabia. Despite repeated attempts to gain official recognition, the Saudi government has never granted a license permitting his organization to function. Mr. al-Mugaiteeb operates in the Kingdom at his own risk. He was involved in the high profile case of three Saudi reformers who were imprisoned March 2004 and eventually pardoned by King Abdullah in August 2005 after much international media attention and advocacy. In the past, Mr. al-Mugaiteeb has faced travel bans by the Saudi government and served 13 months in prison in the 1990s for political activism. Mr. al-Mugaiteeb was trained as a journalist and has worked for Reuters and other news agencies in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. WHO: Ibrahim al-Mugaiteeb, Director and Founder of the Human Rights First Society in Saudi Arabia WHEN: 3:30 - 5:00 pm, Thursday, October 5, 2006 WHERE: The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom,

800 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 790, Washington, DC 20002 \*\* Seating is limited, so please RSVP by calling Dwight Bashir at (202) 523-3240, ext. 22 or by email at [dbashir@uscirf.gov](mailto:dbashir@uscirf.gov) \*\*

Felice D. Gaer, Chair

- Michael Cromartie, Vice Chair Elizabeth H. Prodromou, Vice Chair Nina Shea, Vice Chair Preeta D. Bansal Archbishop Charles J. Chaput Khaled Abou El Fadl Richard D. Land Bishop Ricardo Ramirez Ambassador John V. Hanford III, Ex-Officio Joseph R. Crapa, Executive Director