

The European Saudi Organization for Human Rights (ESOHR)
Schmidt-Knobelsdorf Str. 8
Berlin, Germany
www.esohr.org

~~Masayoshi SEn~~

Chief Executive Officer

~~CC: Chad Fenness~~

Chief Compliance Officer

Softbank Holding Group

1-9-1 Higashi-Shimbashi

Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-7303 Access

Japan

6 May 2020

Dear Mr. ~~Sen~~

We at the European Saudi Organization for Human Rights (ESOHR) write to you a second time to **ask that you reconsider SoftBank's involvement in the NEOM Project in Saudi Arabia**. Since the date of our first letter in February of this year, Saudi Arabia has accelerated its plans to forcibly evict and relocate native populations in order to begin construction on NEOM. In doing so, Saudi security forces have already extrajudicially killed one civilian. We anticipate further deaths if the international community fails to act.

In a letter dated 21 February 2020, attached to this letter, we wrote to you to express our concerns that your involvement in the NEOM project would have significant negative repercussions for local populations. We specifically cited that SoftBank's involvement, which was instrumental in securing startup funding for the project, would result in the forced relocation of at least 20,000 persons from their ancestral homes, including many members of Saudi Arabia's al-Howaitat tribe population. We further stated that the Saudi government was "strong-arming" local people away from their lands with "illegal eminent domain actions" to seize indigenous lands, and that the process had up-to-then been anything but peaceful or inclusive.

Sadly, last month we saw our understanding of the NEOM project, and SoftBank's associated involvement, realized in bloodshed. On Monday, 13 April 2020, **Saudi agents extrajudicially executed Abdul Rahim al-Huwaiti** in the NEOM area mere hours after he posted a video on social media expressing defiance against a forced eviction order, which he received as part of the Government's construction of the NEOM project. Earlier that day, videos began circulating on al-Howaitat tribe social media accounts documenting a heavy Saudi security presence in the region, apparently intended to forcibly evict the local population. Abdul Rahim featured prominently in the videos, in which he indicated his intent to disobey the Saudi government's eviction order and predicted that he would be killed in retaliation. Several hours later, Saudi security forces killed Abdul Rahim in his home. Photos from the scene show that Saudi security forces used live ammunition with intent to kill.

ESOHR believes that the government's use of weapons against civilians such as Abdul Rahim al-Huwaiti with the intent to kill constitutes an extrajudicial killing in support of an illegal mass deportation campaign of a native population, and that SoftBank's involvement in funding the NEOM construction project implicates SoftBank in the death of Abdul Rahim al-Howaiti, as well as any deaths that may follow. We also note that this is not the first time that Saudi Arabia has employed lethal force in an eviction campaign. The Government previously used excessive force and medium and heavy weaponry during its occupation of the city of al-Awamiyah, and in its destruction and removal of the [Al-Musawara](#) archeological neighborhood, in 2017.

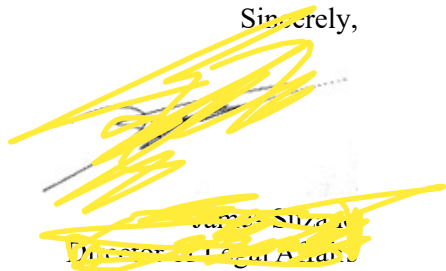


The Saudi action that killed Abdul Rahim al-Howaiti is not without precedent. It has happened before, and it will happen again, and again, and again. **But SoftBank is in a position to do something about it.** Your company's own commitment to human rights and its ethical decision-making model necessitate action. We therefore reiterate our request that your company reconsider its involvement with the NEOM project, suspending any and all contributions until such time as Saudi Arabia demonstrates the capacity to involve local populations, including the al-Howaitat tribe, in a meaningful and impactful decision-making process that fully respects their rights to their indigenous, ancestral home.

As before, we remain at your disposal in the case that you should require further information in support of such a decision. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact me at info@esohr.org.

Thank you very much for your time. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,



Samir Suleiman
Director of Legal Affairs

European Saudi Organization for Human Rights