

Malaysian police detain Saudi tweeter
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AFP

Malaysian police today said they had detained a young Saudi journalist who fled his country after Twitter comments he made about the Prophet Muhammad triggered calls for his execution.

Hamza Kashgari was taken into custody after flying into Malaysia's main international airport yesterday, police spokesperson Ramli Yoosuf told AFP.

"Kashgari was detained at the airport upon arrival following a request made to us by Interpol after the Saudi authorities applied for it," he said.

AFP could not immediately confirm where the 23-year-old Kashgari flew in from.

State news agency Bernama said Kashgari was arrested in Muslim-majority Malaysia "for allegedly insulting Islam and the Prophet Muhammad".

Malaysia and Saudi Arabia do not have a formal extradition treaty.

However, an official with the Malaysian Home Ministry who asked to remain unidentified said Kashgari could be extradited under other bilateral security agreements.

The controversial tweet sparked some 30,000 responses, according to an online service that tracks Twitter postings in the Arab world.

Insulting the prophet is considered blasphemous in Islam and is a crime punishable by death in Saudi Arabia.

Kashgari apologised for his remarks but that has not stemmed calls for his head.

A committee of top clerics branded Kashgari "an apostate" and an "infidel", demanding he be tried in an Islamic court.

Malaysia has warm relations with Saudi Arabia. Saudi King Abdullah Aziz Al-Saud praised Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak as "a Muslim leader" when the premier performed a haj pilgrimage to Mecca in November.

- AFP

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