



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

CANADA URGES SAUDI ARABIA TO RELEASE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS



The Canadian foreign ministry and the Canadian embassy in Riyadh urged the Saudi authorities to “immediately release” civil rights activists.

“We urge the Saudi authorities to immediately release them and all other peaceful human rights activists,” the Canadian embassy [tweeted](#) on Friday.



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Last week Saudi authorities arrested two prominent women rights activists, [Samar Badawi](#) and Nassima al-Sadah, and held them incommunicado.

Badawi is a recipient of the 2012 International Women of Courage Award by the US State Department, in recognition of her campaigning for women suffrage and her challenging of the male guardianship system in the Gulf kingdom.

Al-Sadah was among the first women to run for office in Saudi Arabia in 2015 as part of a campaign for women's political rights. She was, however, disqualified and barred from running.

The arrests followed a spate of detentions of women's rights activists in the run-up to the end of the ban on women driving in the kingdom in late [June](#).

The Canadian embassy in Riyadh had said it was "[gravely concerned](#)" over the wave of arrests of rights campaigners in the kingdom, including award-winning gender rights activist Samar Badawi, the sister of jailed dissident blogger Raif Badawi.

Raif Badawi's wife Ensaf Haidar lives in Canada and recently became a Canadian citizen.

Saudi's anger over the Canadian statement

After the Canadian calls on Saudi Arabia for the immediate release of human rights activists swept up in a new wave of detentions, the Saudi foreign ministry later [tweeted](#): "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has never accepted any interference in its domestic affairs by, or orders from any country."

"Using the phrase (immediately release) in the Canadian statement is very unfortunate, reprehensible, and unacceptable in relations between States," the ministry said in another [tweet](#).

As countermeasures Saudi Arabia [suspended new trade and investment](#) with Canada, as announced in a statement released by the official Saudi Press Agency on Sunday.

In 2014, the Canadian unit of US weapons maker General Dynamics won a contract worth as much as \$13bn to build light-armoured vehicles for Saudi Arabia, in what Ottawa said at the time was the largest advanced manufacturing export win in Canadian history.

Saudi foreign ministry also said Saudi Arabia considered the Canadian ambassador *persona non grata* ("unwelcome person", a diplomatic term which indicates a foreign person whose entering or remaining in a particular country is prohibited by that country's government), giving him [24 hours](#) to leave the country, while [summoned](#) its own ambassador to Canada.



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Falling of masks

Standing up for the defence of human rights beyond mere rhetoric and lip service is something that indeed upset abusive countries. Other than rebuking Canada's urge, Saudi Arabia mobilised its international allies and puppet institutions to try to coarsen its voice. In doing so it only becomes easier to testify which are the countries and institutions that support human rights violations.

The first to stand by the violations of Saudi Arabia was [Bahrain](#), country which despite [housing](#) the Arab Court for Human Rights leaves nothing to be desired to Saudi Arabia when it comes to human rights violations, especially the [persecution of human rights defenders](#) and [repression of political opposition](#).

Further, the Arab Parliament – whose motto quite ironically is “for the promotion of democracy and stable development” – in the person of its president [Mishaal bin Fahm Al-Salami](#), a Saudi national, and member of the Saudi Shura Council, not surprisingly supported Saudi Arabia in condemning Canada's defence of the civil and political rights of Saudi human rights activists.

Moreover, Saudi Arabian Mecca-based NGO “[Muslim World League](#)” through its president Muhammad bin Abdul Karim Issa, also a Saudi national, joined the chorus of the upset ones when human rights violations in Saudi Arabia are exposed internationally.

ICSFT strongly condemns the arrests of all human rights defenders, women's rights activists, and all political activists by the Saudi authorities and call on the Government of Saudi Arabia for their immediate release and the dropping of any, and all, charges against them.

We warmly welcome and congratulate the brave pace taken by Canada. As such, we continue to urge the international community to make it clear to Saudi Arabia that its ongoing suppression of peaceful government critics cannot continue.

Canada showed the world that taking concrete actions is not impossible and – given the overreaction of Saudi Arabia and its allies – they are effective. These measures can be even more effective if the countries that say to care for human rights stand together in a serious and committed manner to put an end to human rights violations at the international level.

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