



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING  
FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS  
Registration No. 2795/2012  
OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

**SAUDI WOMEN UNDER ATTACK BY CROWN PRINCE  
MOHAMMAD BIN SALMAN'S DRACONIAN ADMINISTRATION**



*Some of Saudi Arabian women's rights activists in detention*

Women human rights defenders and allies who are challenging the institutional discrimination in the country are languishing in prison casted aside as traitors for merely advocating for equal rights and gender justice. ICSFT urges the Saudi Arabian authorities to immediately release all those detained for their legitimate human rights activities, to drop all charges against them, and to guarantee a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders.



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Since its last UPR review in 2013, Saudi Arabia has doubled down repression by arresting human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and bloggers on bogus state security and counter-terror charges.

Among many other recommendations that the country has accepted and failed to implement, Saudi Arabia has also failed to implement accepted UPR recommendations to end the guardianship system.

Despite the new crown prince, Mohammad bin Salman's, fake reform rhetoric, Since 15 May alone, at least 12 women human rights defenders have been arrested and detained including, three prominent women activists Ms. Israa Al-Ghomgham Loujain, al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan, Samar Badawi and Nassima al-Sada, and Aziza al-Yousef. Many of them had been campaigning for ending male guardianship over women and for women's right to drive. Ms. Israa Al-Ghomgham is being tried in Riyadh's Specialized Criminal Court - set up to handle terrorism-related cases, facing the death penalty for charges that appear to lack legal bases and without a legal representation during her trial.

Some of them remain held incommunicado. This specific round of crackdown began shortly before Saudi Arabia lifted the ban on women driving in the country. Many of the activists detained campaigned for the right to drive and the end of the repressive male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia for many years. Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman's international public relations campaign contrasts sharply with an intensifying crackdown on dissenting voices, including those campaigning for equal rights for women.

The Vienna Declaration affirmed that the human rights of women are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. Further the Declaration also affirmed the full and equal enjoyment by women of all human rights and urged that this be a priority for Governments.



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As well the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and representatives from all of the UN human rights treaty bodies have affirmed that all forms of abuse or undue restrictions against human rights defenders constitute violations of States' parties obligations towards the realization of rights set out in the Treaties.

However on the ground women are denied of their basic human rights, and the Saudi authorities continue to target and harass women human rights defenders who work towards this goal. Saudi Arabia repression against freedom of expression extends to countries who are voicing concern over the ongoing silencing of dissenting voices.

To illustrate, the Canadian ambassador to Saudi Arabia was expelled after a tweet from Canadian Foreign Policy account. After Saudi Arabia accused Canada of "overt and blatant interference in the internal affairs" of the country.

The tweet said "Canada is gravely concerned about additional arrests of civil society and women's rights activists in #SaudiArabia, including Samar Badawi. We urge the Saudi authorities to immediately release them and all other peaceful #humanrights activists."

Last week the UN human rights experts urged Saudi Arabia to immediately and unconditionally release all women human rights defenders, including six defenders who remain in jail on charges relating to their peaceful defense of human rights. Part of the experts statement reads, "We condemn in the strongest possible terms the actions of the Saudi authorities against these women human rights defenders and we call on them, as a matter of urgency, to immediately release and drop the charges against all of them, We urge the Saudi authorities to immediately make the whereabouts of these five human rights defenders known and to grant them access to their families and lawyers"



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The UN experts further stated “Measures aimed at countering terrorism should never be used to suppress or curtail human rights work. And expressed concern that the targeting of Ms. Al-Ghomgham might in some way be motivated by the fact that she belongs to Saudi Arabia’s Shia minority.”

The judicial harassment, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance experienced by women defenders in Saudi Arabia are an outrageous violations of international human rights law. No one should ever be punished for exercising their most fundamental human rights, much less face the death penalty. Any execution carried out under such conditions would amount to an arbitrary deprivation of life.

The international community cannot carry on looking the other way as this relentless persecution of those who stand up for human rights in Saudi Arabia continues.

The international community in particular, States with significant influence in Saudi Arabia – such as the USA, UK and France, must pressure the Saudi Arabian authorities to end this targeted repression of activists in the country, and hold Saudi Arabia accountable for its human rights abuses.

Saudi Arabia should stop this draconian crackdown against human rights defenders for exercising their right to expression.