

URGENT ACTION

WOMEN ACTIVISTS FACE PRISON SENTENCES

11 Saudi women activists on trial before the Criminal Court in Riyadh risk being sentenced to prison terms on charges related to their women's rights activism. Many of them have campaigned against the long-standing ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia, and the end of the male guardianship system. While seven women activists were temporarily and conditionally released, four others remain in detention. The 11 women remain at risk of being sentenced to prison.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 105.18**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud

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Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Your Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud,

On 28 March 2019, women activists Aziza al-Yousef, Iman al-Nafjan and Dr Ruqayyah al-Muharib, who are amongst a group of 11 women activists on trial, were temporarily and conditionally released. On 2 May, Amal al-Harbi, Dr Hatoun al-Fassi, Dr Abir al-Namankani and Maysaa al-Mane'a were also temporarily and conditionally released. Maya'a al-Zahrani, Nouf Abdulaziz, Shadan al-Anezi and Loujain al-Hathloul remain detained.

The 11 Saudi women activists were detained since May 2018, following a sweeping wave of arrests targeting human rights activists. Many of the women activists brought to trial have campaigned against the long-standing ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia, and for the end of the male guardianship system.

For the first 10 months of their detention, the women activists remained held without charges. They were detained incommunicado with no access to their families or lawyers during the first three months of their detention. On their first trial session on 13 March 2019, several of the women activists were charged with contacting international organizations, including Amnesty International, journalists and other activists. Since their trial began, several women activists told the court that they were tortured, ill-treated and sexually abused during the first three months of their detention. The Public Prosecution denied these allegations. In addition, diplomats and journalists have been consistently banned from attending the court sessions.

I urge you to drop all charges against the 11 women activists, and to release immediately and unconditionally those still detained, as they are prisoners of conscience, solely detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association. I also urge you to allow independent monitors into the prisons to investigate allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual abuse, as well as allow foreign diplomats and journalists access to the trial sessions.

Yours sincerely,

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since May 2018, at least 15 activists, including several women human rights defenders have been detained without charges in Saudi Arabia. On 19 May, the Saudi Press Agency reported that seven individuals have been arrested for their “suspicious contact with foreign entities”, “recruiting people working in sensitive government positions” and “providing financial support to hostile entities abroad with the aim of undermining the security and stability of the Kingdom and shaking the country’s social fabric”. Amongst those targeted are prominent women human rights defenders Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan and Aziza al-Yousef

In July 2018, two prominent women human rights defenders, Samar Badawi and Nassima al-Sada, were also arbitrarily detained. Samar Badawi and Nassima al-Sada remain in detention without charges. Nassima al-Sada has been placed in solitary confinement since early February 2019. In June 2018 the authorities detained women’s rights activists Nouf Abdulaziz and Maya’a al-Zahrani, and activists who have previously been persecuted for their human rights work, such as Mohammed al-Bajadi and Khalid al-Omeir. Hatoun al-Fassi, a prominent women’s rights activist and academic was also reportedly detained a few days after Saudi Arabia lifted the driving ban in June 2018.

In November 2018, reports emerged that several activists, including several women arbitrarily detained since May 2018, were reportedly tortured, subjected to sexual violence and otherwise ill-treated during the first three months of their detention. (See [Press Release](#): Saudi Arabia: Reports of torture and sexual harassment of detained activist).

Since 4 April 2019, the Saudi Arabian authorities have arrested at least 14 individuals - journalists, writers and academics including, Salah al-Haidar, the son of a woman human rights defender Aziza al-Yousef. Others include Abdullah al-Duhailan, a journalist, novelist and advocate for Palestinian rights and Fahad Abalkhail, who has supported the “Women to Drive” Campaign. In their continuing crackdown, it is no coincidence that the Saudi Arabian authorities are shamelessly targeting those citizens who are part and parcel of the society’s vibrant intellectual, artistic, and activist landscape.

The wave of arrests in May 2018 is emblematic of an ongoing crackdown on human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia, and continued stifling of freedom of expression, association, and assembly. Since early 2018, several human rights defenders have been tried before the Specialized Criminal Court and handed down harsh prison sentences, as well as social media and travel bans under provisions of the counter-terror law, its follow up decrees and the Anti-Cyber Crime law for their peaceful human rights activism (See [Press Release](#): Saudi Arabia: First human rights defenders sentenced under leadership of ‘reformer’ Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman)

On 14 March 2019, the UN Human Rights Council adopted the Universal Periodic Review outcome on Saudi Arabia in a mechanism to scrutinize the country’s human rights record. Despite promises of reform during the meeting in Geneva, several women activists remain in detention and arbitrary detentions. (See [Public Statement](#): Saudi Arabia: Human Rights Defenders Remain in Detention Despite Promises of Reform).

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English and Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 27 June 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Yousef, Amal al-Harbi, Dr. Ruqayyah al-Mharib, Nouf Abdulaziz, Maya’a al-Zahrani, Shadan al-Anezi, Dr. Abir Namankni, Dr. Hatoun al-Fassi and Masaya’a al-Mane’a (preferred pronouns: She/her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/0057/2019/en/>