



WOMEN'S MARCH GLOBAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

40 Organisations Urge the UN Human Rights Council to hold Saudi Arabia Accountable

Women's March Global joins over 40 organisations urging ministries of Foreign Affairs to address the human rights violations in Saudi Arabia

WORLD | 26 June - As the Special Rapporteur Agnes Callamard presents today to the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) her findings into the extrajudicial killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, 40 civil society organisations publish a [letter](#) sent to 48 ministries of Foreign Affairs from all regional groups at the UN, urging them to establish a mechanism to report on the human rights violations in the country and urge the Saudi government to immediately and unconditionally release all those arbitrarily detained, abolish the male guardianship system, and establish an immediate moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

“No State is above scrutiny for its human rights record,” said the organisations.

The organisations highlighted that the provisional release of some activists demonstrates that HRC scrutiny can contribute to positive human rights outcomes on the ground, particularly with respect to the cases of detained women human rights defenders. But for this scrutiny to remain effective, it must be sustained.

Over a dozen Saudi women human rights defenders were arrested mid-May 2018 after the lift of the driving ban. Some of them were tortured and threatened with rape, yet no perpetrator has been held accountable. In March 2019, 36 countries at the HRC [called](#) on Saudi Arabia to release all individuals detained for exercising their fundamental freedoms, including ten women human rights defenders who were individually named.

Since then, several of them were referred to trial after almost ten months of detention without a charge, but they are facing unfair trials; seven were provisionally released; and many have not been charged nor referred to trial and remain arbitrarily detained. The authorities' crackdown on freedom of expression has continued. In April 2019, the Saudi government arrested at least fourteen bloggers, writers and family members of women human rights defenders. This included the son of Aziza Al Youssef, one of the women's rights activists that was provisionally released on 28 March 2019. The next hearing of the women human rights defenders is [scheduled](#) for 27 June where defender Samar Badawi will appear for the first time.

“This is a big step in the right direction however we continue to be gravely concerned about the safety and wellbeing of these activists,” shared Executive Director at Women’s March Global Uma Mishra-Newbery. “ It is our hope that this letter urges concrete action from those in power.”

The human rights situation in Saudi Arabia has also deteriorated on other fronts, including through the increased use of the death penalty. Many of the 37 individuals who were executed on 23 April 2019 had been tortured into confessing and all of the individuals were convicted in unfair trials.

On the 19th of June 2019, UN Special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions Dr. Agnes Callamard released her [report](#) on her investigation into the murder of Khashoggi which found that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is responsible for his extrajudicial execution.

The [letter to 48 governments](#) is part of the ongoing advocacy of national, regional and international civil society organisations to [push](#) for the immediate and unconditional release of Saudi activists and guarantee that they can continue their activism without threat of reprisal.

The next hearing of the women human rights defenders is scheduled for 27th of June where defender Samar Badawi will appear for the first time.

-30-

ABOUT WOMEN’S MARCH GLOBAL

Women’s March Global empowers communities, organisations and individuals to start Chapters, take action, organise events and learn. Women's March Global community chapters are run independently, under a free license from Women's March Global.

Website: <http://womensmarchglobal.org>

Medium: [@Womens-March-Global](#)

Facebook: [@womensmarchglobal](#)

Twitter: [@WM_global](#)

Instagram: [@womensmarchglobal](#)

For media enquiries regarding Women’s March Global, please contact:

Melissa Durrell

Media Manager

media@womensmarchglobal.org

+1 519 500 4408