



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Saudi Arabia | Free Saudi activists now!

WORLD | 26 October 2018 - Saudi Arabia should immediately and unconditionally release all arbitrarily detained activists, respect their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and put an immediate end to its nationwide crackdown, a coalition of leading human rights organizations said today. A symbolic display of the magnitude of the authorities' crackdown has been the enforced disappearance, alleged torture and the extrajudicial killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul, Turkey.

"The nationwide crackdown against civil society in Saudi Arabia continues unabated", said Danny Sriskandarajah, Secretary General of CIVICUS, the global civil society alliance. "Journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders and lawyers are facing arbitrary arrest, detention, smear campaigns labelling them as 'foreign agents and terrorists', and criminalisation for exercising their fundamental human rights", added Sriskandarajah.

As the authorities lifted the driving ban for women, they [arrested dozens of women human rights defenders](#) who have been campaigning against the ban and the male guardianship system. "These women face double the repression: they are not only targeted for speaking out against the State's policies but also for defying patriarchy and demanding gender equality", said Uma Mishra-Newbery, Director of Global Community for Women's March Global.

"Jamal Khashoggi's arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and extrajudicial killing in Istanbul demonstrates the extent to which the Saudi government is willing to go to suppress critical voices, from journalists to human rights defenders and women's rights activists", said Hussain Abdullah, director of Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain.

The Saudi authorities [have a long way to go to ensure a safe and enabling environment](#) for human rights defenders. This includes repealing all restrictive laws on press censorship, laws to target defenders who use the Internet for their activism, laws to restrict the establishment and operations of independent civil society organizations, and counter-terrorism laws used to imprison defenders.

Yet, ahead of [Saudi Arabia's 3rd Universal Periodic Review](#) (UPR) on 5 November 2018, the Saudi authorities now have an important opportunity to demonstrate to the international community that they are committed to taking immediate steps to uphold their human rights obligations.

“A first step in the right direction would be releasing all those detained in association with the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association or peaceful assembly”, said Salma El Hosseiny, ISHR’s Human Rights Council advocate.

“There has never been a more critical time for the international community to hold Saudi Arabia accountable for years of [widespread and systematic human rights violations](#) committed with impunity including gender-based discrimination against Saudis as well as violations of international humanitarian law in [Yemen](#)”, said Khalid Ibrahim, executive director of the Gulf Center for Human Rights.

Ahead of Saudi Arabia’s upcoming UPR, the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR), Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), CVICUS and Women’s March Global launch an advocacy campaign to highlight the [widespread and systematic](#) crackdown against dissent in the country.

Join us in calling for the release of Saudi women activists by [signing this petition](#).

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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. Women’s March Global is the global sister organisation of Women’s March.

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