

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
Promoting human rights by protecting those who defend them

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24 August 2018

VIA FAX and EMAIL TO:

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Re: Release Samar Badawi and other Women's Rights Advocates

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) again calls upon Saudi Arabia to immediately release **Samar Badawi** and other women's rights advocates arbitrarily detained, following our letter of 3 August 2018.

The arrest and arbitrary detention of Samar Badawi and other peaceful defenders including **Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Yousef, Israa Al-Ghomgam, Nassima Al-Sadah and Hatoon Al Fassi** and denial of rights to humane treatment and due process including access to counsel, access to independent judicial oversight and freedom from incommunicado detention and other ill treatment, constitute grave and continuing violations of Saudi Arabia's international law obligations.

Saudi Arabia continues to refuse to comply with calls from the international community to stop the crackdown against women defenders and to release those detained. Several defenders arrested prior to the lift of the women's driving ban have been arbitrarily detained for over three months.

Saudi Arabia has, to date ignored the 27 June 2018 call by nine United Nations (UN) experts, "for the urgent release of all of those detained while pursuing their legitimate activities in the promotion and protection of women's rights in Saudi Arabia" (emphasis added). In a joint statement,¹ the nine UN experts confirmed they had been in contact the Saudi government about their urgent request, "to free the human rights defenders who remain in prison solely as a result of working to advance the enjoyment of rights for all" (emphasis added). The UN experts who joined in this joint urgent action are:

- Mr. Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur (SR) on the situation of human rights defenders;
- Mr. Seong-Phil Hong, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention;
- Mr. David Kaye, SR on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression;
- Ms. Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, SR on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism;
- Mr. Bernard Duhaime, Chair of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances;
- Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voulé, SR on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association;
- Mr. Philip Alston, SR on extreme poverty and human rights;
- Ms. Ivana Radačić, Chair of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice; and,
- Dr. Dubravka Šimonović, SR on violence against women.

Saudi Arabia has also ignored the 31 May 2018 European Parliament resolution² condemning arrests of 'Women's Rights Defenders' (WRDs) and calling for their release and an end to all forms of harassment, including at the judicial level, against WRDs, their lawyers and all other human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia, so that they are able to carry out their legitimate work without unjustified hindrance and fear of reprisal.

Saudi Arabia responded with threats to the tempered 2 August statement by Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chrystia Freeland that Canada was, "[v]ery alarmed to learn that Samar Badawi, Raif Badawi's sister, has been imprisoned in Saudi Arabia. Canada stands together with the Badawi family in this difficult time, and we continue to strongly call for the release of both Raif and Samar Badawi."³

International human rights organizations calling for the release of the women's rights defenders arbitrarily detained in the recent crackdown include: Amnesty International, IFEX, The Global Network Promoting and Protecting Free Expression, Front Line Defenders, Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders and the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (an FIDH-OMCT partnership)

¹ Saudi Arabia must immediately free women human rights defenders held in crackdown, 27 June 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23270&LangID=E>

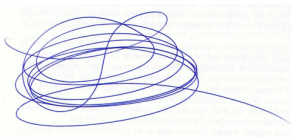
² European Parliament resolution on women's rights defenders in Saudi Arabia (2018/2712(RSP))

³ Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland on Twitter, 2 August, 2018. <https://twitter.com/cafreeland/status/1025030172624515072>

LRWC again calls on Saudi Arabia to:

1. Comply with the 27 June 2018 call from the nine UN experts and Immediately and unconditionally release **Samar Badawi, Israa Al-Ghomgam, Nassima Al-Sadah** and **Hatoon Al Fassi** and the human rights defenders who remain in prison solely as a result of working to advance the enjoyment of rights for all in Saudi Arabia;
2. Immediately disclose **Samar Badawi** and **Nassima Al-Sadah's** whereabouts;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of **Samar Badawi, Nassima Al-Sadah, Hatoon Al Fassi, Nouf Abdulaziz, Mayya Al-Zahrani, Eman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Youssef, Loujain al- Hathloul, Mohammed al-Rabiah, Mohamed al-Bejadi, Abdulaziz Al- Mesha'al** and **Ibrahim al-Mudaimeegh**; as of all detained human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia; and
4. Cease the persistent harassment of **Samar Badawi** and all human rights defenders.

Sincerely,



Gail Davidson, Executive Director, LRWC



Maya Duvage, LRWC member

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) is a committee of lawyers and others who promote human rights and the rule of law internationally by: protecting advocacy rights; campaigning for jurists in danger because of their human rights advocacy; engaging in research and education; and working in cooperation with other human rights organizations. LRWC has Special Consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

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