

# 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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## ROBERT F. KENNEDY HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD NOMINATION February 14, 2020

Submitted on February 6, 2020.

**Nominee:** Samar Badawi  
Country: Saudi Arabia  
Email:  
Website:  
Organization:  
Position at Organization:  
Phone (add country code if outside US):

### **Nominator Information:**

Name: Gail Davidson  
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### **1) How does your nominee conduct human rights work?**

As an independent activist

### **2) Is the nominee located outside the country in which they are affecting the human rights movement? If so, please specify where the nominee is located and whether or not they can travel to the country they work on.**

Samar Badawi was arrested on 30 July 2018 from her home and essentially disappeared. At the time of her arrest her daughter, aged 6 was taken from her and transferred to a relative. She was last seen at the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh on 27 June 2019 for charges under the Cyber Crimes Law, carrying up to 20 years in prison. No international observers were allowed in the court. It is not known where Ms. Badawi has been detained. She is believed to be detained in Dhaban Mabath Prison, a maximum-security *prison* near Dahaban, Jeddah, in Saudi Arabia.

### **The nominee's human rights work:**

#### **(a) What are the human rights issues the nominee is working on to advance?**

Samar Badawi has been a prominent advocate for women's rights since 2010, advocating for their right to vote and drive, and to end male guardianship in Saudi Arabia. She has vigorously advocated for the release of several imprisoned human rights defenders, including Raif Badawi and Waleed Abu al-Khair.

**(b) What are the nominee’s human rights goals and objectives?**

To ensure that all people in Saudi Arabia can enjoy the rights and freedoms recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that women will enjoy rights to equality and non-discrimination.

**(c) What tools does the nominee use to achieve his/her human rights objectives?**

Samar Badawi has filed several lawsuits: against her father for refusing to allow her to marry the person she wanted, against the government for the rejection of her registration for the 2011 municipal elections, and against the General Directorate of Traffic for rejecting her and women’s rights activists’ driver’s licence applications. She has mounted a world-wide campaign for the release of her husband, Waleed Abu al-Khair. She participated in the 2011–2012 women driving campaign by driving regularly and helping women drivers with police and court procedures. She worked through the Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia.

**(d) What are the nominee’s greatest accomplishments in advancing their human rights goals?**

Samar Badawi is known and respected internationally. She has been a prominent advocate for women’s rights since 2010, advocating for the right of women to vote and to drive and for an end to male guardianship in Saudi Arabia. She has also vigorously advocated for the release of several imprisoned human rights defenders, including Raif Badawi and Waleed Abu al-Khair. She worked with the Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia, which was a non-government human rights organization registered in the Province of Ontario and operating out of Saudi Arabia, until it was shut down by the State.

**(e) Why does your nominee deserve to be chosen as the 2020 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Laureate?**

Samar Badawi is a powerful and fearless voice for two of the most significant issues facing Saudi women: women’s suffrage and the guardianship system. Ms. Badawi was the first woman to sue her father for abusing the guardian system and preventing her from marrying the person of her choice. She is also the first woman to file a lawsuit against the government demanding the right for women to vote, and launched an online campaign to encourage other women to file similar suits. The efforts of activists like Ms. Badawi helped encourage a royal decree allowing women to vote and run for office in future municipal elections. She participated in the 2011–2012 women driving campaign by driving regularly since June 2011 and helping women drivers with police and court procedures, and filed charges against the government for rejecting her application for a driver’s licence.

She was awarded the 2012 International Women of Courage Award by the United States Department of State for her guardianship and voting rights lawsuits, and for her encouragement of and inspiration to other women.

Ms. Badawi is being held in incommunicado detention since her arrest in July 2018 by Saudi authorities as part of an unprecedented crackdown on the women’s rights movement in which she and more than a dozen other women’s rights activists who campaigned for the right to drive and an end to the kingdom’s male guardianship system were arrested.

**3) Reference to or copies of written examples of the nominee’s human rights work or news accounts describing it**

**List of documents:**

- [Saudi Arabia: Where Fathers Rule and Courts Oblige](#)". [Human Rights Watch](#). 18 October 2010. [Archived](#) from the original on 7 February 2012;

- "Aspiring woman voter takes ministry to court". Saudi Gazette. 29 April 2011. Archived from the original on 9 March 2012  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/saudi-women-in-drive-ban-legal-bid-6483456.html>
- "Samar Badawi Receives an International Women of Courage Award". U.S. Government. 8 March 2012. Retrieved 30 June 2012.<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-arrests/saudi-arabia-arrests-two-more-womens-rights-activists-rights-group-idUSKBN1KM564>
- "Arrest of human rights defender Samar Badawi in Saudi Arabia latest attempt to intimidate activists". Amnesty International USA. Amnesty International. 12 January 2016. Retrieved 13 January 2016
- "States Should Adopt Resolution at UNHRC to Address Human Rights Violations in Saudi Arabia", 4 June 2019, Joint letter by 39 NGOs calling for the release of Samar Badawi and others. <https://www.lrwc.org/saudi-arabia-states-should-adopt-resolution-at-unhrc-to-address-human-rights-violations-in-saudi-arabia-letter/>
- Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Complaints, Communication Form regarding the enforced disappearance of Samar Badawi submitted by LRWC and the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights September 2019-  
<https://www.lrwc.org/saudi-arabia-arbitrary-arrest-and-forcible-disappearance-of-samar-badawi-wgeid-complaints/>
- Working Paper on the unlawful arrest and detention of Samar Badawi, September 2019, LRWC - <https://www.lrwc.org/working-paper-unlawful-arrest-detention-samar-badawi/>