

[Saudi Arabia | Impunity for the Kingdom's nationwide crackdown cannot prevail](#)

29.10.2018



Since September 2017, the already-restricted civic space came under further attack. 15 journalists and bloggers [have been arrested](#) bringing the total up to 29 journalists currently in detention. Dozens of [women's rights activists](#), who were at the forefront of the campaign for the #Right2Drive, were arrested before the driving ban was lifted. [Up to 100 other human rights defenders](#) are also in detention.

ISHR's Human Rights Council Advocate Salma El Hosseiny said that the enforced disappearance, alleged torture and extrajudicial killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul on 2 October is only one of many gross and systematic violations committed by the Saudi authorities inside and outside the country.

"The Human Rights Council must hold its members accountable and subject them to heightened scrutiny. It's about time that the Council addresses the gross and systematic human rights violations committed in Saudi Arabia", said El Hosseiny.

Over 170 civil society organisations are calling on the Human Rights Council to hold a Special Session on the recent wave of arrests and attacks against journalists, human rights defenders and other dissenting voices in Saudi Arabia. These attacks do not only include detention but also travel bans, smear campaigns and potential imposition of the death penalty against protestors. This crackdown is [facilitated by restrictive laws which criminalise legitimate exercise](#) of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

The crackdown against journalists, defenders and other critics, coupled with the findings of the UN Group of Eminent Experts' [report](#) which concluded that the Coalition, led by Saudi Arabia, has committed acts that may amount to international crimes in Yemen, all demonstrate Saudi Arabia's record of gross and systematic human rights violations. The organisations further urged the UN General Assembly to suspend Saudi Arabia from the UN Human Rights Council, in accordance with operative paragraph 8 of the General Assembly resolution 60/251.

"The international community has so far failed to hold Saudi Arabia accountable to its abysmal human rights record at home. Turning a blind-eye to the ongoing crackdown will send a dangerous message to the Saudi authorities and other authoritarian governments: that impunity will prevail", added El Hosseiny.

Read [here](#) the full statement by 170 organisations and read below the recommendations to the international community and the Saudi authorities:

To the international community, and in particular the UN, to:

1. Take action to ensure there is an international, impartial, prompt, thorough, independent and effective investigation into the murder of journalist Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi;
2. Ensure Saudi Arabia be held accountable for the murder of Khashoggi and for its systematic violations of human rights;
3. Call a Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the recent wave of arrests and attacks against journalists, human rights defenders and other dissenting voices in Saudi Arabia;
4. Take action at the UN General Assembly to suspend Saudi Arabia's membership of the Human Rights Council; and
5. Urge the government of Saudi Arabia to implement the below recommendations.

To the Saudi authorities:

1. Produce the body of Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi and invite independent international experts to oversee investigations into his murder; cooperate with all UN mechanisms; and ensure that those responsible for his death, including those who hold command responsibility, are brought to justice;
2. Immediately quash the convictions of all human rights defenders, including women and men advocating for gender equality, and drop all charges against them;
3. Immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders, writers, journalists and prisoners of conscience in Saudi Arabia whose detention is a result of their peaceful and legitimate work in the promotion and protection of human rights including women's rights;
4. Institute a moratorium on the death penalty; including as punishment for crimes related to the exercise of rights to freedom of opinion and expression, and peaceful assembly;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders and journalists in Saudi Arabia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities and public interest reporting without fear of reprisal;
6. Immediately implement the [recommendations](#) made by the UN Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen; and
7. Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and bring all national laws limiting the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association into compliance with international human rights standards.

The statement is also available in [Spanish](#), [French](#) and [Arabic](#).

Contact: Salma El Hosseiny at s.hosseiny@ishr.ch

Image: ISHR