

HRC General Debate Item 4

Delivered by: Salma El Hosseiny

Thank you Madame President.

This is a joint statement.¹

Loujain Al-Hathloul, Nouf Abdelaziz, Samar Badawi, Nassima Al-Sadah, Mohammed Al-Bajadi, and Miyaa Al-Zahrani all remain in detention for defending women's rights. Several of them were ill-treated and tortured while their perpetrators enjoy impunity. They are facing judicial proceedings marred by violations of international fair trial guarantees. They are denied regular contact with their families and one detainee has gone on a hunger strike to protest her inhumane conditions.

Their arbitrary detention is not an isolated incident but rather part of gross and systematic violations of *fundamental freedoms* by the Saudi authorities.

The Council has repeatedly called on Saudi Arabia to release all individuals detained for exercising their *human rights* and to end the persecution, intimidation and harassment of journalists, activists and their families.

Yet, Saudi Arabia refuses to cooperate in good faith with the Council and its mechanisms. We reiterate, if Saudi Arabia intends to become a Council member, it must uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The immediate and unconditional release of the women's rights activists and human rights defenders would be a litmus test of the Saudi government's political will to improve the human rights situation and start mending its record.

Saudi Arabia must end impunity for torture and extrajudicial killings and establish truth and accountability for the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

It must fully dismantle the male guardianship system in law and practice.

Until these benchmarks are met, we urge the Council to continue its scrutiny and to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism over the situation.

Thank you Madame President.

¹ International Service for Human Rights; Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain; ALQST for Human Rights; Women's March Global; Gulf Centre for Human Rights; Equality Now; CIVICUS.