

Question for written answer E-000588/2016
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 130
Ilhan Kyuchyuk (ALDE)

Subject: VP/HR - Promotion of women's rights in Saudi Arabia

At the beginning of 2016, Saudi Arabia executed 47 prisoners, including the prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. His execution further destabilised the Muslim world and the fragile situation in the Middle East. Moreover, it sparked international outrage, and once again, drew the world's attention to the kingdom's notorious human rights record. This happened at a very sensitive time for Saudi Arabia – the Saudi blogger, Raif Badawi, had been awarded the Sakharov Prize by Parliament for his fight for freedom of speech and thought, while the kingdom had been elected to the UN Human Rights Council. In light of this, Saudi Arabia held local elections in which women were allowed to take part for the first time. The election of 20 Saudi women in various parts of Saudi Arabia (including one near Mecca – home to Islam's holiest site) is a welcome development which will contribute to women's empowerment, civic engagement and democracy in the kingdom.

- Does the VP/HR plan to facilitate the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Saudi Arabia?
- If so, what kind of measures should be taken?