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*Plenary sitting*

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**B8-0263/2018**

29.5.2018

## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia  
(2018/2712(RSP))

**Cristian Dan Preda, Tomáš Zdechovský, Pavel Svoboda, Lefteris Christoforou, Marijana Petir, Tunne Kelam, Csaba Sógor, József Nagy, Ivan Štefanec, Laima Liucija Andrikiienė, Eduard Kukan, Roberta Metsola, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Lars Adaktusson, Giovanni La Via, Elisabetta Gardini, Željana Zovko, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Michaela Šojdrová, Adam Szejnfeld, Joachim Zeller, Seán Kelly, Dubravka Šuica, Deirdre Clune, Francis Zammit Dimech, Sandra Kalniete, Ivana Maletić, Inese Vaidere, Ramona Nicole Mănescu**  
on behalf of the PPE Group

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

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1998 (“UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders”), the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988, and the UN Convention on the Elimination and All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1981 to which Saudi Arabia is a State Party,
- having regard to its resolutions of 13 December 2007 on women's rights in Saudi Arabia, and of 11 March 2014 on Saudi Arabia, its relations with the EU and its role in the Middle East and North Africa; of 12 February 2015 on the case of Mr Raif Badawi, Saudi Arabia; and of 8 October 2015 on the case of Ali Mohammed al-Nimr,
- having regard to the outcome of the visits of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights to Saudi Arabia in October 2017, and of a Delegation of the Committee of Foreign Affairs (AFET) of the European Parliament and the Subcommittee of Human Rights (DROI) in February 2018; having regard to the statement of the Chair of the DROI Committee issued in February 2017 welcoming the decision of the Saudi authorities allowing women to drive,
- having regard to the statement by the EEAS Spokesperson on the sentencing of Human Rights defenders in Saudi Arabia, of 27 January 2018,
- having regard to the intervention by European Commissioner Christos Stylianides, on behalf of the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in the European Parliament debate on Saudi Arabia's election as Member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (4 July 2017),
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and on Human Rights Dialogues with third countries,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - A. Whereas it has been widely reported the detention by the State Security Presidency since 15 May 2018 and posterior imprisonment of at least 10 human rights defenders, mostly women (Loujain al-Hathloul, Aziza Al-Yousef, Eman Al-Nafjan, Madeha Al-Ajroush, Aisha Al-Mana, Ibrahim Al-Mudaimigh, Hessah Al-Sheikh, Walaa Al-Shubbar, Mohammed Al-Rabae, Abdulaziz Al-Meshaal), who previously campaigned for the right to drive and the end to the male guardianship system, accusing them of “suspicious contacts with foreign parties”, “recruit people working in sensitive

government sites and support hostile elements abroad financially”, and of undermining “security and stability”; whereas several state related media have published the names and photographs of some of the detainees accusing them of betraying the state, and a media campaign has targeted them as “agents of embassies”;

- B. Whereas the detainees have been not given any access to lawyers, according to people familiar with the arrests, and one of the women (Loujain Al-Hathloul, in accordance to the Gulf Centre for Human Rights) has been entirely incommunicado; whereas Loujain Al-Hathloul was also detained in June 2017 and December 2014;
- C. Whereas three of the detainees, Aisha Al-Mana, Hessah Al-Sheikh and Madeha Al-Ajrourh, seem to have been released on 24 May, in accordance to human rights groups;
- D. Whereas Saudi society is changing gradually but constantly, and the Saudi Arabian authorities are involved in a step-by-step process to enlarge women’s rights and their presence and visibility in the public space, adopting concrete measures, some of them highly symbolic, to improve their due recognition as equal citizens, such as: the right to vote in municipal elections, the access to the consultative Shura Council and the National Human Rights Council, the restriction of arbitrary guardian consent requirements that government bureaucracies impose on women, the lifting of the ban prohibiting women from driving, or the access to public sport events;
- E. Whereas Saudi Arabia’s UN Human Development Index value for 2015 is 0.847— which put the country in the very high human development category—positioning it at 38 out of 188 countries and territories, with remarkable and sustained improvement over the last years; whereas Saudi Arabia has a UN Gender Inequality Index value of 0.257, ranking it 50 out of 159 countries in the 2015 index; whereas 63.3% of women hold at least secondary education degrees and 19.9% of seats are held by women in the parliament;
- F. Whereas the Experts of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women met in February 2018 and congratulated Saudi Arabia for its recently adopted open approach to promoting the rights of women, and remarked that the Vision 2030, bringing about economic and social transformation of the country based on women’s empowerment, was a real opportunity for Saudi women to find their legal emancipation which was absolutely crucial for the full enjoyment of their rights in line with the Convention;
  - 1. Expresses its concerns about the above-mentioned detention of women’s rights defenders, which could undermine the credibility of the ongoing reformist process in Saudi Arabia; calls for the immediate release of all the remaining detainees;
  - 2. Emphasises that human rights defenders should be treated in respecting their human rights, the right to fair trial, including the right to access a lawyer, in accordance with the conditions set out in the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;

3. Pays tribute to the Saudi women who are looking for overcoming any unfair and discriminatory treatment and to those who have defended human rights despite the difficulties that they have to face;
4. Supports the reformist programme of the Saudi authorities and calls for its effective and practical implementation in order to, among other things, increase the recognition of human rights and freedoms of its citizens, in particular, of women; reminds that these reforms should continue in order to accompany the process of modernization of the country that its own society is requiring, and that could lead it to a higher level of social, economic and human development;
5. Invites the Saudi authorities to engage in bilateral human rights dialogues with the EU as a useful instrument to exchange views and experiences that could lead to the improvement of the human rights' situation in accordance to International Law; expresses its openness to hold a constructive and open dialogue with Saudi authorities, including parliamentarians, on the implementation of their international human rights commitments; calls for an exchange of expertise on justice and legal matters in order to strengthen the protection of individual rights in Saudi Arabia;
6. Calls on the HR/VP, European External Action Service and Member States to ensure full implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, and expand their protection and support for human rights defenders.