



Plenary sitting

B8-0126/2019

12.2.2019

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 defenders in Saudi Arabia
(2019/2564(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

European Parliament resolution on women's rights defenders in Saudi Arabia (2019/2564(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Saudi Arabia,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966,
 - having regard to 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 the outcome of the 13th EU-Saudi Arabia Inter-Parliamentary Meeting of October 2017 in Saudi Arabia,
 - having regard to the Anti-harassment Bill approved by the Saudi Shura Council on 28 May 2018,
 - having regard to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Saudi Arabia of November 2018,
 - having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the detention and posterior imprisonment by the State Security Presidency of several human rights defenders and relatives who campaigned for the right to drive and the end to the male guardianship system were since 15 May 2018 widely reported; whereas many of them are women, and some of them remain in prison;
- B. whereas on 31 July 2018 the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement on arrests of human rights defenders and activists in Saudi Arabia, including women's rights activists;
- C. whereas on 4 February 2019, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy stated in her opening speech at 5th EU-League of Arab States ministerial meeting: “And let me say that cooperation between Europe and the Arab world was never so important and, I believe, has never been so necessary”;
- D. whereas Saudi Arabia's UN Human Development Index value for 2018 is 0.853 - positioning it at 39 out of 188 countries and territories; whereas Saudi Arabia has a UN Gender Inequality Index value of 0.234, ranking it 39 out of 189 countries in the 2017 index; whereas the country has a UN Gender Development Index (GDI) of 0.877 (ranked number 39 in the world);

- E. whereas the Saudi authorities are showing their commitment to continue the process of changes towards an improvement of the legal and social recognition of women's rights and women's visibility in social, economic and political life;
1. Remains seriously concerned about the situation of women's rights defenders in Saudi Arabia; calls attention to their arrest and detention;
 2. Stresses that above-mentioned detention of women's rights defenders could undermine the credibility of the ongoing progress in Saudi Arabia; urges its Government to release all peaceful human rights defenders, including all women rights defenders who are still in detention;
 3. Reminds that any criminal investigation must be held in a transparent manner, with full respect for due process rights; reiterates that Women's rights defenders should be treated with respect to their human rights, and when in trial, their right to fair trial and due process, including the right to access a lawyer, should be ensured;
 4. Stresses that the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and of peaceful association and assembly are protected under international human rights law; recalls that non-violent exercise of these rights is not a criminal offence, and as such should not invoke prosecution under counter-terrorism legislation;
 5. Recalls that Saudi Arabia has lifted its driving ban on women and adopted other measures towards granting women equal rights;
 6. Considers that women's rights defenders, who carry out their activities peacefully, should be able to do their work without fear of reprisals or prosecution; calls on the Government to take measures to ensure that women's rights defenders in Saudi Arabia can work in an enabling environment;
 7. Praises women's rights defenders, and in particular Saudi women, that seek equal and fair treatment in their society, but also those who defend human rights and human dignity facing personal and family difficulties;
 8. Reiterates its support to programs of the Saudi authorities to improve the legal and social situation of women in Saudi Arabia, in terms of equality, in particular, through the implementation of the UPR recommendations;
 9. Renews its invitation to the Saudi authorities to engage in constructive and regular bilateral dialogue on human rights with the EU, and, in particular, on women's rights, that may lead to the improvement of the social and legal situation of women in the country; calls for closer cooperation and exchanges between experts and representatives of organisations of Saudi Arabia and the EU on this matter; welcomes recent Saudi initiatives to hold meetings in the EU Institutions to speak up about issues of concern;
 10. Calls on the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and EU Member States to monitor their trials;
 11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign

Affairs and Security Policy, the European External Action Service, the UN Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Human Rights Council, H.M. King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Secretary-General of the Centre for National Dialogue of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.