

Question for written answer E-002409/2021

to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Rule 138

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Subject: The unfair criminal justice system of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia recently announced a series of important and necessary reforms, but the ongoing repression and lack of respect for basic rights are major barriers to progress. Although Amnesty International has reported that the number of unfair arrests has fallen in Saudi Arabia, they are still ongoing, and oppression against dissidents remains fierce.

While some unjustly detained dissidents and activists, including women's rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul, have been released by the Saudi authorities, they remain subject to restrictions that hamper their ability to speak out without fear of reprisal.

Scores of people have been arrested and detained in pre-trial detention for six months or more. Detainees are frequently held incommunicado and denied access to their lawyers during interrogations. Some human rights activists have been detained without charge or trial for more than two years.

1. What is the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy doing to resolve the issue of arbitrary detentions and unfair trials in the deficient criminal justice system of Saudi Arabia?
2. What measures has he taken so far to help imprisoned human rights defenders to get access to legal assistance?