

Saudi Arabia, its relations with the EU and its role in the Middle East and North Africa

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Ana GOMES (S&D, PT) on Saudi Arabia, its relations with the EU and its role in the Middle East and North Africa.

The report recalled that Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is an influential political, economic and religious actor in the Middle East and the Islamic world, the world's leading oil producer, and a founder and leading member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and of the G-20 group. It is an important trading partner for the EU. However, the changing political and strategic context in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region necessitates a reassessment of EU-KSA relations.

Members stressed the European interest in a peaceful and orderly evolution and political reform process in KSA, as a key factor for long-term peace, stability and development in the region. Against this background, the KSA is called upon to:

- allow its National Human Rights Association to operate with **independence** and to comply with the UN standards on national human rights institutions (the Paris Principles);
- honour its commitments to several human rights instruments, including the Arab Charter on Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention against Torture, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- sign and **ratify the Rome Statute** of the International Criminal Court (ICC);
- improve their Shari'a-based criminal justice system in order to meet the international standards governing procedures for arrest, detention and trials, as well as prisoners' rights;
- **release prisoners of conscience**, to end judicial and extra-judicial harassment of human rights defenders and to speed up the implementation of the new legislation on NGOs, ensuring their registration, freedom to operate and ability to operate legally;
- reform the justice system in order to **eliminate all forms of corporal punishment and the death penalty**;
- ensure that all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment are thoroughly and impartially investigated, that all alleged perpetrators are prosecuted, and that any statement that may have been extracted under torture is not used as evidence in criminal proceedings;
- revoke the male guardianship system;
- **eliminate all restrictions on women's human rights**, freedom of movement, health, education, marriage, employment opportunities, legal personality and representation in judicial processes, and all forms of discrimination against women in family law and in private and public life in order to promote their participation in the economic, social, cultural, civic and political spheres;
- stop exerting pressure on those who campaign for the right of women to drive;
- review and reform women's education in order to increase their economic participation;
- stop the recent violent attacks against migrant workers and to release the thousands who have been arrested and are being kept in makeshift centres, reportedly often without adequate shelter or medical attention.

Lastly, the EU institutions are urged to **increase their presence in the region** and to strengthen working relations with KSA, by increasing resources to the Delegation in Riyadh and by planning regular visits to the Kingdom, namely by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy;