Basic information

2018/2712(RSP) RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects	Procedure completed
Resolution on the situation of women's rights defenders in Saudi Arabia **Subject** 6.10.08 Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general **Geographical area** Saudi Arabia	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
31/05/2018	Decision by Parliament	T8-0232/2018	Summary
31/05/2018	Results of vote in Parliament		
31/05/2018	Debate in Parliament		
31/05/2018	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2018/2712(RSP)
Procedure type	RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects
Procedure subtype	Urgent debate or resolution
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 150
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Motion for a resolution		B8-0259/2018	30/05/2018	
Motion for a resolution		B8-0260/2018	30/05/2018	
Motion for a resolution		B8-0261/2018	30/05/2018	
Motion for a resolution		B8-0262/2018	30/05/2018	
Motion for a resolution		B8-0263/2018	30/05/2018	
Motion for a resolution		B8-0264/2018	30/05/2018	
Motion for a resolution		B8-0268/2018	30/05/2018	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0232/2018	31/05/2018	Summary

Resolution on the situation of women's rights defenders in Saudi Arabia

2018/2712(RSP) - 31/05/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 525 votes to 29 with 71 abstentions, a resolution on the situation on women's rights defenders in Saudi Arabia.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP, ALDE, S&D, ECR Greens/EFA, and EFDD groups.

Parliament asked the Saudi authorities to **put an end to all forms of harassment**, including at judicial level, against **human rights defenders** in the country, following the arrest on 15 May 2018 of sevenseven women – Loujain al-Hathloul, Aisha al-Mana, Madeha al-Ajroush, Eman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Youssef, Hessah al-Sheikh, Walaa al-Shubbar – and four men – Ibrahim Fahad Al-Nafjan, Ibrahim al-Modeimigh, Mohammed al-Rabiah and Abdulaziz al-Meshaal – for their women's rights activism, particularly for their campaign against the ban on women driving and in favour of abolishing the male guardianship system.

These human rights defenders have since been charged with supporting the activities of foreign circles, recruiting persons in charge of sensitive government positions and providing foreign circles with money with the aim of destabilising the Kingdom. They were arrested ahead of the anticipated lifting of the ban on women driving on 24 June 2018.

Members denounced the continued, **systemic discrimination against women in Saudi Arabia,** and condemned the ongoing repression of human rights defenders, which undermines the credibility of the reform process in the country. They called on the Saudi government to immediately and unconditionally **release all human rights defenders** and other prisoners of conscience detained and sentenced for merely exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Furthermore, the **treatment of all detainees** while in detention must adhere to 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.

Parliament called on the Saudi authorities to **revise** the Law on Associations and Foundations of December 2015 in order to allow women activists to organise themselves and to work freely and independently without undue interference by the authorities. It urged the revision of the Anti-Terrorist Law, the Anti-Cybercrime Law and the Press and Publications Law, which are repeatedly used to prosecute human rights defenders, as well as of all discriminatory provisions present in the legal system.

Parliament stated its deep concern about the **prevalence of gender-based violence** in Saudi Arabia, as well as the existence of the **male guardianship system**. It called on Saudi Arabia to adopt comprehensive legislation to tackle gender-based violence against women, to remove all obstacles to women's access to justice and to take the necessary steps to **ensure the protection and the enhancement of women's rights,** such as ending child marriages, forced marriages and the compulsory dress code for women. Women activists should also be allowed to organise themselves and work without fear of repercussions.

It called on the European Union and its institutions to:

- ensure the tabling of a resolution on the situation of human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia at the next session of the **UN Human Rights Council**, and to raise the issue of membership of states with questionable human rights records, including as regards respect for women's rights and gender equality
- propose at the UN Human Rights Council the appointment of a **Special Rapporteur on human rights in Saudi Arabia;**
- include a discussion on human rights, particularly the situation of women human rights defenders, as a permanent item on the agenda of the annual summit between the EU and the **Gulf Cooperation Council**, as well as other bilateral and multilateral fora;
- consider the introduction of **targeted measures against individuals** responsible for grave human rights violations;
- actively support **civil society groups** and individuals defending human rights in Saudi Arabia, including through the arrangement of prison visits, trial monitoring and public statements;
- continue conducting a **dialogue** with Saudi Arabia on human rights, fundamental freedoms and the troubling role of the country in the region;

- ensure full implementation of the **EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders**, and to expand their protection and support for human rights defenders, particularly women human rights defenders;

Lastly, Parliament called on the Saudi authorities to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and to allow independent press and media and ensure freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly for all inhabitants of Saudi Arabia.