

Human Rights Council- 11th Session
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
Oral Intervention - Item 6 - UPR KSA
10 June, 2009
Delivered by Dina Mansour

Thank you Mr. President

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies commends Saudi Arabia for cooperation with the UPR process, for responding to the request for a visit made by the Special Rapporteur on violence against Women and for recent reform efforts made to the armed forces, the judiciary and the religious establishment.

CIHRS urges Saudi Arabia to display a genuine will for upholding human rights principles in the country by ratifying human rights instruments, in particular the ICCPR and the ICESCR, to consider the possibility of acceding to international instruments it is not yet party to, as well as to modify its domestic legislation so as to conform to basic international human rights standards, as recommended in paragraph 87 of document A/HRC/11/23, Saudi Arabia should also ensure access to its territories to all Special Rapporteurs with pending request for visit .

In reference to recommendations made in the same report, in particular under paragraph 87(18), CIHRS notes with great concern, ongoing discrimination against women, where they are treated as legal minors under the male guardianship system. Under the basic law of Saudi Arabia, gender equality is still not guaranteed, and sex segregation is built into Saudi Arabia's legal and social structures. According to the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against Women, women still lack autonomy and economic dependence, especially in practices surrounding divorce and child custody.

To address these recommendations Saudi Arabia should abolish all legislations, measures and practices that view women as second-class citizens, enact legislations that criminalize violence against women and withdraw its two reservations on CEDAW as recommended in paragraph 46 of the report. We further call on the Kingdom to take concrete steps in abolishing the mistreatment of migrant workers.

CIHRS denotes with great concern the situation of undermined religious freedoms in the country and the discrimination against the Shiite minority and calls on Saudi Arabia to ensure their integration within its legal and political structure and reform its legislation with a view to gradually allow the public practice of other faiths and beliefs recommendation highlighted in paragraph 33. We further call on the Kingdom to remove restrictions on the rights to freedom of association and assembly as well as to freedom of expression and movement against human rights defenders, including all travel bans, as recommended in paragraphs 65(c) and 70(e).

CIHRS asks the Kingdom to cease the application of all type of corporal and inhumane punishment most notably public flogging as a judicial penalty that violates the Convention Against Torture (CAT) as well as to amend the Code of Criminal Practice to stipulate that only individuals aged over 18 will be tried as adults as well as to establish a moratorium on executions of persons having committed crimes before the age of 18 so as to conform with international human rights standards.

Finally, CIHRS notes that Saudi Arabia did not provide a response to most recommendations, contrary to its obligations under the institution building text, and would ask the delegation of the Kingdom to do so as well as to re-consider its reservations expressed in paragraph 88 and call on the Saudi government to show a genuine respect to the UPR process as a mean to promote and protect human rights in the Kingdom.

Thank you Mr. President