

ADVANCE QUESTIONS TO SAUDI ARABIA

GERMANY

- In August 2013, the Saudi Council of Ministers has adopted legislation to ban domestic abuse. What measures does the KSA take to implement this ban and to address all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, to ensure that women and girls who are victims of violence receive effective protection and redress, and to bring perpetrators of violence to justice?
- In 2008 the KSA acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD). Which measures does the KSA adopt, in accordance with CRPD, to prohibit all forms of discrimination on the basis of disability, including all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, and to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to an inclusive education?

NETHERLANDS

- What measures is Saudi Arabia taking to implement its judicial reforms, especially with regard to the Code of Criminal Procedure?
- What is the status of Saudi efforts to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights? When can formal ratification be expected?
- What formalities should be followed by non-Saudi government officials to be allowed to attend public trials at criminal and security courts?
- Would Saudi Arabia consider extending an open invitation to all UN Special Rapporteurs?

NORWAY

- How do you see prospects for greater autonomy for women with regard to their personal status, including ultimately the granting of full legal identity, in light of the strict system of male guardianship?
- In light of the positive passing of a domestic violence law in August, what are your priorities ahead, and how do you plan to implement necessary enforcement mechanisms?
- How do you see the role of human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia, especially in light of a number of high-profile arrests, trials, and closure of organizations lately?

- How can human rights defenders be supported by Saudi Authorities in accordance with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders?

SLOVENIA

- Slovenia understands that Saudi Arabia has no penal code and no system of binding judicial precedents and that determination and severity of punishments can vary with a judge's interpretation of Shari'a law. Where can one find precise definitions of cognizable criminal offences?

SWEDEN

- Does the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia contemplate any measures to introduce a moratorium on the application of the capital punishment with a view to abolish it?
- Are there any plans to revise the application of penalties with a view to abolish the above types of punishments?
- When does Saudi Arabia plan to accede to the ICCPR?

UNITED KINGDOM

- Paragraph 27 of Saudi Arabia's national report guarantees freedom of expression under the Basic Law. However, we regularly hear complaints that freedom of speech, including on the internet, is unduly restricted – for example, the blasphemy laws prevent free exchange of religious views - Mr Raif Al-Badawi was sentenced to 600 lashes and seven years in prison in July 2013 for violating Islamic values and blasphemy through his website, and protests are banned. How does Saudi Arabia reconcile this with customary international law on Freedom of Expression, as defined in Article 19 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights?
- Legislation continues to prevent independent human rights bodies from operating in the Kingdom. It is disappointing to note that the recommendations, made by the UK, Bahrain and Palestine at Saudi Arabia's last UPR, to enact a law of association that would enable independent civil society groups to form has not been met, despite its acceptance. What measures is Saudi Arabia taking both legally, and in practice, to ensure the establishment and operation of genuinely independent human rights organisations?
- We welcome the positive measures taken to define 18 as the age of majority. What more is being done to prevent individuals under the age of 18 years from facing the death penalty and those under 16 years from marrying, and, accordingly, has the Code of Criminal Practice been amended in line with our previous, and accepted, recommendation?

- The measures taken to monitor and prevent torture in prisons and places of detention are welcome. However, allegations of torture and mistreatment, including solitary confinement, continue to undermine faith in the efforts taken to address this problem. What considerations have been given to introducing a truly independent body with responsibility for monitoring and inspecting prisons to increase transparency and accountability, and will Saudi Arabia consider ratifying the Optional Protocol on the Convention against Torture?
- Would you elaborate on the assertion in Saudi Arabia's national report that Sharia Law guarantees freedom to choose a religion? There are a number of examples where the state has suppressed this human right. For example, through the application of the law against apostasy, and as the US Human Rights Report 2012 states, school textbooks continue to include justifications for the social exclusion and killing of religious minorities and apostates, despite the programme to revise their content.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

- We are very concerned that Saudi citizens have been harassed, targeted, detained, and punished for simply expressing their beliefs, opinions, and views. On July 29, Saudi Arabian authorities sentenced Raif Badawi to seven years in prison and 600 lashes for charges including “blasphemy” and “using a website to mock religious symbols” through the operation of his “Free Saudi Liberals” website. Authorities have also sentenced to lengthy prison terms Abdulkarim al-Khudhr, Mohammed al-Qatani, and Abdullah al-Hamad – founders of the Saudi Association for Civil and Political Rights (ACPRA). What steps is the Saudi government taking to ensure it meets its commitments under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to protect and guarantee individuals the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion?
- In August, Saudi Arabia enacted a labor law providing new legal protections for domestic workers. However, we remain concerned that foreign workers in some cases have been abused and mistreated by employers, and in extreme cases, subjected to forced labor. What actions is the Saudi government taking to ensure that foreign workers are able to report abuses and that the new labor law is properly enforced?
- We are concerned that authorities have arrested numerous individuals on security-related charges and have detained these individuals for long periods without access to legal counsel. What measures is the Saudi government taking to ensure that individuals are afforded due process of law, including a clear and timely description of charges against them, access to counsel, and minimum fair trial guarantees?