

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

# Saudi women are speaking up online

*Male guardianship, sexual harassment amongst major concerns.*

By Hiba Zayadin

HRW (14.04.2020) – <https://bit.ly/2VvXnsp> – Over the past two weeks, Saudi women have taken to Twitter, using pseudonyms, to share their experiences with sexual harassment, the reasons behind their hesitance to report these abuses to the authorities, and demands for the abolition of the discriminatory male guardianship system.

It is a remarkable show of courage at a time when Saudi authorities – under the de facto rule of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman – have maintained a sweeping campaign of repression that included dismantling and silencing the country's women's rights movement. Prominent women's rights activists like Loujain al-Hathloul and Samar Badawi languish in prison nearly two years since their arrests, while other women since released face travel bans and outstanding trials.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia introduced reforms for which these women had long advocated. Today, Saudi women can drive; those over 21 years old can obtain passports and travel without permission from male guardians; and recently introduced laws are meant to protect them against sexual harassment and employment discrimination.

But, as some of the anonymous Saudi women have revealed on Twitter, the road to equality is long.

Using two Arabic language hashtags which translate to "why I didn't report it" and "down with remnants of the guardianship system," Saudi women pointed to persistent elements of the male guardianship system that continue to keep women trapped in abusive situations.

Saudi women complained that if they attempt to flee abuse, they can still be arrested and forcibly returned if their male family members bring a legal claim based on uquq (parental disobedience), inqiyad (submission to a guardian's authority), or leaving the marital or guardian's home. They also spoke of

how when they report abuse, they are often referred to closed shelters, which they are typically not allowed to leave unless they reconcile with family members or accept an arranged marriage.

The world is being told that Saudi Arabia is modernizing on women's rights. But the reality is that with no organized women's rights movement or environment in which women can safely and openly demand their rights, there is little room for further advances. The international community should call for the release of all women's rights activists, the safeguarding of women's right to freedom of expression and association, and for the complete abolition of the male guardianship system.

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1269