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# **SAUDI ARABIA: Women against male guardianship and home detention**

## **Saudi women activists launch campaign against home detention and male guardianship**

*Using the #HomeDetainees hashtag, the Twitter campaign is aimed at raising awareness about the conditions of women, targeting the male guardianship system (husband, father or brother). Women inside and outside the country share*

*experiences of suffering. For many, the home is “a woman’s grave and man’s paradise”.*

Asia News (01.02.2022) – <https://bit.ly/32Z8cLC> – A group of Saudi women activists has launched a campaign on Twitter to raise awareness about and protest against the violence many of them still endure amid timid attempts at reform.

The heavy restrictions on women’s movements, personal development and professional fulfillment – the legacy of an archaic and patriarchal society favoured by a reactionary vision of Islam – are embodied in the male guardianship system, which denies women their freedom.

The initiative allows women to share on social media their personal experiences as “prisoners” in their own homes and highlights the limits imposed on their social life.

Activists chose the hashtag **#HomeDetainees** to increase awareness and knowledge about “women who languish at home”, a place that is “a woman’s grave and man’s paradise”.

The campaign’s goal is to abolish altogether the male guardianship system, which places women’s lives under men’s control, be they fathers, husbands or brothers, who can decide their fate in terms of “education, work and healthcare”.

The campaign is also demanding that Saudi women be granted the right to “movement, independence and decision-making” so that

they can be free in their personal life and not feel “trapped” in their homes.

In recent weeks, several women have used the platform to share personal experiences of suffering, deprivation as well as physical and spiritual pain.

“My prison suffocates my passions and aspirations,” wrote one user who did not use her real name. “It chokes off my desires, capabilities, ambitions,” and “rendered me severely depressed and obsessive, as well as afflicted me with thousands of psychological ailments”.

Another user described life as a woman in Saudi Arabia as akin to being “assaulted with all forms of violence on the psychological, physical, and material level”.

The constant monitoring denies women “the privacy of closing the door of the room with a key,” said another, making some feel like an “immobile piece of furniture in a living room”, seeing “their age and youth passing while they are trapped between four walls”.

In trying to free the country from dependence on oil, the basis of the “Vision 2030” program, Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) is seeking, albeit carefully, to change the fundamentalist basis of **Islam** and social life in the country.

The **reforms** he introduced since 2019 have touched social and **religious life**, allowing for example women to drive and go

to stadiums (albeit under certain restrictions), and boosting the entertainment industry.

However, the **arrests of senior officials and businessmen**, the **crackdown on activists and critics**, and the **Khashoggi affair** have raised questions about the extent of change.

Still, the campaign has garnered support and solidarity from abroad, as evinced by the message of a woman from Kuwait who claims to “share pain and suffering” felt by Saudi women.

It also comes in the wake of the sudden release of two members of the royal family, Princess Basmah and her daughter Souhoud Al Sharif, who were arrested in 2019 and held in Al Ha’ir maximum security prison.

Detained without formal charges, their imprisonment was likely prompted by their complaints over the treatment of women, the male guardianship system, and their opposition to the war in Yemen.

*Photo credits: Asia News*

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