

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL / WORKING GROUP on the
Universal Periodic Review of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – Fourth cycle**

22 January 2024

Palais des Nations, Geneva

Dr. Hala Maziad Altuwaijri, President (Minister) of the Human Rights Commission, presented an oral update.

She affirmed that over the past three UPR cycles, the implementation rate was 80% of the total recommendations provided. The current four cycles of the UPR are based on the lessons learned in the previous reviews and based on determining and effecting the sources of collecting information, follow-up, and in-depth analysis while using quantitative and qualitative evidence, as well as adopting a participatory approach. Workshops and focus groups have been conducted to complete and review information and data.

In 2018, 258 recommendations were advanced, 181 were endorsed and 31 were partially endorsed. To date, 173 recommendations have already been implemented and 39 are under implementation.

She emphasized that reforms in different human rights areas are based on the principle that human beings must be at the centre and beneficiaries of development.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is adamant about promoting and protecting human rights and advancing them.

In addition to the **Travel Document Act**, which ensures women and men are treated equally in travel; **the Social Insurance Act** ensures 60 is the retirement age; and the **Labour Code** ensures gender equality in the workplace.

The Child Protection Act and the Social Welfare Act, which target the most vulnerable, are in accordance with international standards. Saudi Arabia has also reformed the **Acts protecting privacy, the elderly, and the Anti-Harassment Act**, including at work.

The Kingdom has also abolished the **death penalty** in Taziri-based cases, replacing it with a 10-year prison term for juveniles.

Also, she mentioned the progress, developments, and projects made in the field of **education**. Several educational projects focused on humanitarian and human rights-based approaches and capacity building. The result was a reduction in illiteracy rates to 3.7% (ranking 7th in the G20).

Concerning **women's rights** reforms and initiatives, she focused on the implementation of women's empowerment, free access to services, and gender equality (in terms of job opportunity: in 2022, 37% of Saudi women were working compared with 17% in 2017). The Kingdom has modified the law in terms of protection from violence against women and girls, ill-treatment, and abuse. Now it is easier to identify and monitor cases of abuse.

Recommendations

Ratification of International Obligations

- **The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure**
- **The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**
- **ICCPR**
- **ESCR**
- **CEDAW**
- **The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

Women's Rights

- **Continue its efforts in the field of women's empowerment, particularly in education, labour, culture, and sports**
- **Gender equality**
- **Labour market: to continue taking efforts to further increase the percentage of women in senior management positions and in the workforce**
- **Continue efforts to protect women and children from violence and exploitation in all its forms**

Türkiye, Tanzania, Venezuela, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Butane, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Costa Rica, DPRK, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, Greece, India, Japan, Mongolia, Niger, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic.

Rights for People with Disabilities

- **Continue enhancing the rights of persons with disabilities in all areas**
- **Women with Disabilities**
- **To further increase the rate of persons with disabilities in the labour market**

Türkiye, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Congo, Dominica Republic, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Niger.

In July 2019, the country amended the Labor Code to prohibit discrimination based on disabilities. The law on protection from discrimination and abuse has been modified, ramping up penalties and sanctions for abusing persons with disabilities. The rate of persons with disability in the labour market has been increased by some 80% as 2022. In 2023 adopted a law om persons with disabilities. It fully meets the international standards and the international convention.

Terrorism and Human Trafficking

- **Amend cybercrime and anti-terrorism legislation to define terrorism in line with international human rights norms, and ensure that interpretation and application of the definition in counter-terrorism operations are consistent with human rights**

- **To bring its laws in line with international human rights standards by amending the definition of terrorism in the counter-terrorism legislation, publishing the planned new penal code**

UK, USA, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Jordan, Kazakhstan, New Zealand.

The country works on different fronts to fight against and eradicate the crime of human trafficking and human smuggling. Established a National Mechanism to support victims of trafficking and to prosecute those responsible. A preventive approach to promote national capacity and to tackle human trafficking.

Right to Education

- **Continuing its efforts to raise the level of awareness, education and training in the field of human rights**
- **Adopt inclusive educational practices guaranteeing equal opportunities for students as well as those living with disabilities**
- **Continue efforts to guarantee access to quality education as well as free education for all**

Uzbekistan, Algeria, Burundi, Cuba, Djibouti, India, Malaysia,

Freedom of Expression

- **Respect freedoms of expression and association and cease the prosecution of dissent**
- **Take measures to ensure that journalists and human rights defenders can substantially exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression, without fear of intimidation, harassment or arbitrary arrests**
- **To enact comprehensive legislation ensuring the protection and guarantee of the right to freedom of expression**

USA, Belgium, Chechia, Denmark, Estonia, Ghana, Greece, Ireland, Slovenia, Luxembourg.

Freedom of expression is safeguarded under national law, including the Press and Publication Act, which states that freedom of expression using different media is guaranteed. According to Article 5 of the Act, freedom of opinion and expression is to be respected as long as it does not conflict with existing laws and regulations. Freedom of publication is the principle that underlies national law, and censorship is applied only very sparingly, in accordance with the law, and for legitimate purposes, such as access restrictions on content according to age.

Migrants

- **Undertake a comprehensive, transparent investigation of allegations that Saudi security forces are killing and abusing migrants crossing the Yemeni border, cease any abuses, ensure accountability for any abuses or violations, and issue a public investigation report**
- **Strengthen the protection of the human rights of migrant workers by intensifying the monitoring of their working conditions and applying penalties where any violations are detected**

USA, Zambia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Butane, Brazil, Indonesia, Norway.

Death Penalty

- **Uphold provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the obligation to not impose the death penalty for offences committed by persons under 18**
- **Abolish the death penalty for drug related offenses, in compliance with the obligation to ensure its limitation to the most serious crimes as defined under international law**

Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, Ghana, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Switzerland.

Civil Society and Civic Space

- **Promote a safe environment for civil society, through legal and administrative measures**

Ecuador, Greece.

The role of civil society has been significantly promoted and protected over the past few years, as part of the Saudi Vision 2030. This has led to an increase in the number of civil society associations and institutions in the country, which currently number over 3,000. As a way of promoting solidarity among members of society, article 19 (2) of the implementing regulations to the Civil Society Associations and Institutions Act has been amended to allow persons aged 15 to participate in the non-profit sector by becoming board members of civil society organizations.