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UN Human Rights Council
Twenty-Ninth Session
15 June – 3 July 2015

Item 8: Follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

General Debate

Mr. President,

United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/251 reaffirmed the Vienna Declaration and decided that members of the Human Rights Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Saudi Arabia, a current Council member, has persistently failed to uphold the highest standards. The Saudi Arabian authorities continue to systematically repress all independent human rights activity and activists in the country. Amnesty International raised this key concern in its written and oral statements to the previous Council session in March 2015¹. This repression has continued unabated.

We welcome all the positive steps the Saudi Arabian authorities have taken in recent years to protect and promote the rights of women. However, we remain concerned that the authorities have persistently failed to follow through on relevant UPR commitments, including to abolish the male guardianship system over women. Partly as a result of that failure, women in Saudi Arabia continue to face severe and pervasive discrimination.

Amnesty International remains extremely concerned at the unprecedented rate of executions in Saudi Arabia. Between 1 January and 16 June 2015, Saudi Arabia executed 102 persons, half of them for crimes that do not meet the threshold of most serious crimes required under international law. In addition, many of these executions were carried out after grossly unfair trials. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all circumstances.

¹ **Saudi Arabia: is this what is to be expected of a UN Human Rights Council member (Part 1)?** (AI Index: MDE 23/1054/2015, 24 February 2015)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/1054/2015/en/>

Saudi Arabia's dizzying crackdown on human rights activism must be reversed immediately: Oral statement (AI Index: MDE 23/1287/2015, 23 March 2015)

(see also above-mentioned written statement on Saudi Arabia submitted under item 4)
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/1287/2015/en/>

Amnesty International is also concerned about the ongoing discrimination towards Saudi Arabia's Shi'a Muslim community and harsh penal sentences, including death sentences, handed down in recent months to Shi'a activists and community leaders. Some of these came after grossly unfair trials, such as those of the prominent Saudi Arabian Shi'a Muslim cleric, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, and his nephew Ali al-Nimr who was a juvenile at the time of his alleged offence.

Amnesty International urges this Council, its members and observer states, to call upon Saudi Arabia to put an end to its incessant violations of international human rights law and standards, and to implement recommendations made in our written statement.²

Thank you Mr. President.

² Saudi Arabia: is this what is to be expected of a UN Human Rights Council member (Part 2)?
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/1647/2015/en/>