

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**UN Human Rights Council
Thirty-First session
29 February – 24 March 2016**

Item 4: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

General Debate

Mr. President,

United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/251 requires that members of the Human Rights Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and fully cooperate with the Council.

Since becoming a Council member in 2014, Saudi Arabia has carried out gross and systematic violations of human rights causing significant deterioration of its human rights situation. It has also breached international humanitarian law in the conflict in Yemen.

While other member states of this Council have looked away, the Saudi Arabian authorities have implemented an abusive counter-terrorism law that equates peaceful dissent with terrorism; they have sentenced peaceful critics and human rights defenders to lengthy prison terms after deeply unfair trials. The authorities have executed at least 319 people since 2014, including 47 in a mass execution designed to settle political scores. At least 40% of executions have been for offences which under international law must not be punishable by death. Death sentences were upheld against juvenile "offenders" convicted solely on "confessions" that available information indicates were obtained under torture.

Since March 2015, Saudi Arabia has led a military coalition that has killed and injured hundreds of civilians in Yemen and destroyed civilian homes and infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, markets and factories. More than half of the civilians killed in the conflict have died as a result of airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition. Multiple attacks have violated international humanitarian law and may have constituted war crimes.

Throughout its membership, Saudi Arabia's engagement with this Council and its Special Procedures and other mechanisms and the UN human rights treaty bodies

has been dismal. In September 2015 the authorities failed to respond to the Opinion adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention calling for the immediate release of nine prominent peaceful activists arbitrarily detained and deprived of liberty. The same month Saudi Arabia stood in the way of the establishment of an international independent investigation into violations by all parties to the conflict in Yemen.

Amnesty International calls on this Council, in light of the Saudi Arabian authorities' unwavering record of committing gross and systematic human rights violations, to hold Saudi Arabia accountable for its failure to live up to the basic requirements of membership of the Council.

Thank you Mr. President.