

URGENT ACTION

SAUDI WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVIST UNFAIRLY TRIED

Saudi woman human rights defender Loujain al-Hathloul was sentenced to a prison term of five years and eight months on 28 December 2020 following a deeply unfair trial by the Specialized Criminal Court. She was convicted for defending women's right to drive and calling for an end to the patriarchal male guardianship system. Loujain al-Hathloul, a prisoner of conscience, has appealed the sentence. Amnesty International urges Saudi Arabian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release her and ensure her conviction is quashed.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)
Twitter: @KingSalman*

Your Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud,

*On 28 December 2020, Saudi woman human rights defender **Loujain al-Hathloul** was sentenced to five years and eight months in prison by the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC). She was convicted of "spying with foreign parties" and "conspiring against the kingdom" for promoting women's rights and calling for the end of the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia.*

The Court has suspended 2 years and 10 months of Loujain al-Hathloul's term and has included the time she has already served in detention since May 2018, which makes March 2021 the projected time for her release. However, given the unjust charges against her and the grossly unfair trial by the SCC, Loujain al-Hathloul has appealed the sentence while she continues to be locked up in her prison cell amid the COVID-19 crisis.

In November 2020, Loujain al-Hathloul's case was transferred from the Criminal Court in Riyadh, where she had been on trial since March 2019, to the SCC on national security grounds. The SCC, a special counter-terror court, has been routinely used by the authorities to silence peaceful dissent.

I urge you to release Loujain al-Hathloul immediately and unconditionally and ensure her conviction and sentence are quashed as she is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression. I also urge you to ensure Loujain al-Hathloul's freedom of movement and travel following her release.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Loujain al-Hathloul is one of the most outspoken women human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia. She is well-known for her campaigning against the driving ban and the campaign to end the male guardianship system. In 2014, she was detained for 73 days after she attempted to drive into Saudi Arabia from the United Arab Emirates. Loujain al-Hathloul also went on to stand for election in Saudi Arabia in November 2015 – the first time women were allowed to both vote and stand in elections in the state. However, despite finally being recognized as a candidate, her name was never added to the ballot.

Saudi officials detained Loujain al-Hathloul without charge or trial from [17 May 2018](#) until 13 March 2019, when she appeared for her first court session. Loujain al-Hathloul was subjected to lengthy spells in solitary confinement between 2019 and 2020. For the first three months of detention, Loujain al-Hathloul endured torture, sexual abuse and other forms of ill-treatment when she was held incommunicado and in solitary confinement with no access to her family or lawyer.

On 13 March 2019, Loujain al-Hathloul was among 11 women activists [brought to trial](#) before the Criminal Court in Riyadh. The court session was closed and diplomats and journalists were banned from attending. Several women activists face charges of contacting foreign media, other activists and international organizations including Amnesty International. Some of them were also accused of “promoting women’s rights” and “calling for the end of the male guardianship system.”

On 26 October 2020, Loujain al-Hathloul went on hunger strike for two weeks, in protest at being denied regular contact with her family. As a result of mounting international pressure, Saudi authorities [resumed trials of detained women activists](#), including Loujain al-Hathloul, on 25 November 2020.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 2 APRIL 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Loujain al-Hathloul (She/her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/2281/2020/en/>

(Please note this link is to the Outcome UA on UA 105/18, which made mention to Loujain al-Hathloul's case.)