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ORAL STATEMENT
Item 6
Consideration of UPR reports: Saudi Arabia

UN Human Rights Council
56th session
18 June – 12 July

Mr. President,

The Saudi delegation's responses to concerns raised by states during the UPR process demonstrate, regrettably, a refusal to genuinely engage with the international community on its appalling human rights record.

Since 2018, Amnesty International has documented an escalation in the Saudi authorities' crackdown on all forms of dissent, both online and offline,¹ despite promises by the Saudi government that freedom of expression and opinion were guaranteed rights.²

Individuals continue to be sentenced to decades-long prison terms and even death for exercising their right to freedom of expression.³ We call on Saudi authorities to implement recommendations to amend restrictive laws, including the Anti-Cyber Crime Law and the Counter-Terrorism Law and to release all those imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Mr. President,

The Saudi delegation stated that it has taken measures to remove obstacles hindering women's rights including through the adoption of the Personal Status Act in 2022 which it claims "ensur[es] equality and dignity for both spouses."⁴

¹ Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Eliminating dissent: Amnesty International's submission to the 45th session of the UPR Working Group, January-February 2024" (Index: MDE 23/6936/2023), 1 August 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6936/2023/en/>

² Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Saudi Arabia, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/4, 14 March 2024.

³ Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: Eliminating dissent: Amnesty International's submission to the 45th session of the UPR Working Group, January-February 2024" (Index: MDE 23/6936/2023), 1 August 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6936/2023/en/>

⁴ Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Saudi Arabia, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/4, 14 March 2024.

But Amnesty International's analysis of the law shows that it perpetuates the male guardianship system and codifies discrimination against women in most aspects of family life.⁵ Saudi authorities should immediately amend the Personal Status Law and repeal any provisions or laws that discriminate against women.

The Saudi delegation stated that the death penalty was reserved for the most serious crimes and was prohibited for child offenders.⁶ Amnesty International, however, continues to document cases of child offenders who have been sentenced to death, as well as executions for drug-related crimes. The Saudi authorities should declare an official moratorium on all executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Finally, we encourage Saudi Arabia to implement supported recommendations as soon as possible and urge the government to submit a mid-term report on progress towards implementation of supported recommendations and to use an Item 6 General Debate to bring this to the attention of UN Member States.

Thank you.

⁵ Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: New Personal Status Law Codifies Discrimination Against Women" (Index: MDE 23/6431/2023), 8 March 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6431/2023/en/>

⁶ Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Saudi Arabia, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/4, 14 March 2024.