

URGENT ACTION

TWO WOMEN ARRESTED FOR DRIVING

Two Saudi Arabian women have been arrested for driving. Loujain al-Hathloul and Maysaa al-Amoudi, both supporters of the campaign for women's right to drive in Saudi Arabia, were detained at the al-Batha border crossing with the United Arab Emirates. They are prisoners of conscience.

On 30 November a Saudi woman **Loujain al-Hathloul**, 25, was arrested at the border when she attempted to drive her car to Saudi Arabia from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Security officers in al-Batha, a border city in eastern Saudi Arabia, confiscated her passport and forced her to stay overnight in her car.

On the morning of 1 December, **Maysaa al-Amoudi**, a Saudi Arabian journalist and presenter, was also arrested at the border when she drove from the UAE to al-Batha to provide Loujain al-Hathloul with basic supplies, despite the fact that she had told the Saudi Arabian border authorities that she did not intend to drive inside Saudi Arabia.

Within hours, both women were reportedly taken to a police station in al-Batha where they were interrogated before being transferred for further interrogation to the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution in al-Hufuf city in the Eastern province. Later that same day, Loujain al-Hathloul was taken to a correctional facility for women and Maysaa al-Amoudi was taken to the central prison, both located in al-Ahsa in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia.

Both women's current legal status remains unclear. Their families were informed, but without any explanation, that the detention of both women had been extended for 25 days. The women were interrogated without their lawyers in violation of Saudi Arabian laws, and despite Maysaa al-Amoudi's lawyer's repeated requests to see his client.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to release Loujain al-Hathloul and Maysaa al-Amoudi immediately and unconditionally as they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of movement;
- Urging them to ensure that they are given regular access to their families and lawyers.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JANUARY 2014 TO:

King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior)
+966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)
Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of the Interior
His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed
bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Minister of Justice
His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin
Abdulkareem Al-Issa
Ministry of Justice
University Street
Riyadh 11137
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 401 1741
+966 11 402 0311

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Women in Saudi Arabia have publicly campaigned to lift the ban on them driving since 1990, when around 40 women drove their cars down a main street in Riyadh, the capital. They were stopped by police and a number of them were suspended from work. The women were widely condemned in religious sermons and social circles. The then Grand Mufti, Saudi Arabia's highest religious authority, also issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) against women driving followed by an executive order issued by the Minister of Interior banning women from driving.

In 2011 women's human rights activists re-launched an internet campaign calling on women with international driver's licences to take to the roads in defiance of the ban. Scores of women drove cars to support the campaign. Some were arrested as a result and were made to sign pledges that they would refrain from driving in future. One woman, Manal al-Sharif, was arrested on 22 May 2011, the day after police had stopped her while she was driving, accompanied by her brother, in the city of al-Khobar. She was released 10 days later after she signed a pledge that she would not drive again. On 27 September 2011, one female driver, Shaimaa Jastaniyah, was tried and sentenced to 10 lashes for driving. Her sentence was eventually overturned in April 2012.

Saudi Arabian women's human rights activists have also challenged the driving ban in court. In 2012, several women brought cases before the Board of Grievances, an administrative court with jurisdiction to consider complaints against the state and its public services. The women were attempting to challenge the arbitrary practice of traffic regulation authorities, who had refused to issue them with local driver's licences, even though Saudi Arabian law does not prevent women from acquiring such licenses. So far, there has been no verdict on those cases.

On 26 October 2013 women's rights activists launched a similar initiative in an attempt to overturn the ban. One supporter, Loujain al-Hathloul, officially announced the launch of the campaign in a video posted online. Soon after the announcement, some of the women activists received repeated threats from the authorities to pressure them to stop the campaign and on 25 October, the campaign's website was hacked. Sources close to the authorities also hinted that those who defy the ban will be tried under terrorism related laws as public gatherings are banned in the Kingdom and considered an attempt to overthrow the system. Despite the threats and the intimidation, scores of women drove their cars filming themselves and posting the videos online. Some were arrested but mostly released after a short period of time.

On 23 October 2014, ahead of the one year anniversary of the October 2013 campaign and in an effort to thwart women's human rights activists' continuous efforts to overturn the ban, the Ministry of Interior issued a statement emphasizing that it will firmly apply the law against anyone who participates in a protest in support of the driving campaign.

Women in Saudi Arabia, which is the only country in the world that bans women from driving, face severe discrimination in law and practice and are inadequately protected against domestic and other gender-based violence. The ban on driving is only one example of the many areas of life where women in Saudi Arabia have their human rights denied. Women are still unable to travel, engage in paid work or higher education, or marry without the permission of a male guardian.

Name: Loujain al-Hathloul and Maysaa al-Amoudi
Gender m/f: f