



Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain

1001 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 205 • Washington, D.C. 20036 • (202) 621-6141 • www.adhrb.org • @ADHRB

Mr. President,

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, together with the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, would like to call the Council's attention to the continued lack of implementation of key elements of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action by leading Member States in the Human Rights Council. Today, we would specifically like to draw attention to ongoing failures to implement Article II B, Section 3 of the Declaration, which addresses "the equal status of human rights of women."

The most concerning example of these violations can be found in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia continues to uphold its male-guardianship law, which legally binds women to a designated male guardian, thereby rendering women inferior citizens who are unable to act independently. Despite pledges to dismantle this system during its recent UPR, the guardianship laws continue to leave Saudi women dependent on men in most aspects of daily living. Areas encompassed under the male-guardianship laws extend to include women's rights to access education,



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employment, legal proceedings, or even the ability to undergo certain medical procedures.

These systematic gender-based restrictions in Saudi law also extend to a woman's basic right to travel. In addition to needing male permission to travel outside the country, Saudi Arabia also maintains a ban on the ability of women to drive. Women who challenge this ban may be jailed, fined or face corporal punishment.

We therefore call upon Saudi Arabia, as a Member State on the Human Rights Council, to expeditiously implement the standards laid out in Article II B, Section 3 of the Vienna Declaration, to ensure the equal status of human rights of women, by abolishing the male-guardianship system. Furthermore, in the interest of accountability, we call on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to facilitate a visit by the Working Group on the Issue of Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice.

Thank you.