

Mr. President,

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, with the support of the European Saudi Organization for Human Rights, would like to call attention to the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, following her 2009 visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In 2009, the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women published a report on the broad range of issues facing women and girls in Saudi Arabia. Despite the mandate's extensive report, and the resulting 30 recommendations, the Saudi government has thus far failed to accomplish any of the objectives outlined in the report.

For example, despite recommendations to abolish the Saudi guardianship system, men are responsible for making or approving a wide range of decisions regarding Saudi women's daily lives, including marriage, medical treatment, travel, employment or simply obtaining an identification card.

In the public sphere, the Saudi government has failed to effectively implement the nominal changes they have committed to. Woman's legal testimony remains meaningless without male support, only 30 percent of the private sector are women, and labor codes relegate women to positions that the Minister of Labor deems suitable for female employment. Due to a royal decree in 2012, gender segregation also remains prevalent in the workplace.

Despite a 2013 draft law criminalizing some forms of domestic violence, violators still face minimal punishment for abuse, while retaliation and stigmatization of victims leave many reluctant to report maltreatment. Women also face judiciary discrimination in instances of rape, as the case is left open to the interpretation of the judges, who often punish women for socializing with the perpetrator.

Violence against women and girls remains inadequately addressed in Saudi Arabia. We therefore call on Saudi Arabia, as a Member State in the Human Rights Council, to take seriously the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, and expediently and effectively implement all recommendations of the mandate, and to issue an invitation for a follow up visit to ensure substantive accountability.

Thank you.