

QUARTZ

Saudi Arabia's other critics are still at risk

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The recent disappearance of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi has sparked boycotts and upset statements from business and political leaders around the world. Emmanuel Macron expressed concern, and Donald Trump told Fox, “We don’t like it. I don’t like. No good.” Shocked by a report that Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) allegedly signed off on Khashoggi’s abduction and murder, business leaders and media organizations from Uber to CNN have withdrawn en masse from the Future Investment Initiative conference in Riyadh.

But the brutality, at least, would not be new; Saudi Arabia is ranked 149th out of 159 countries by the Cato Institute for freedom and human rights. It has a well-established habit of denying women basic human freedoms, arresting critics, and crucifying people; the regime is currently pushing a death penalty for human rights activist Israa al-Ghomgham.

As the West reevaluates its onetime enthusiasm for MBS, many more imprisoned Saudi dissidents remain vulnerable. Here are a few:

Loujain al-Hathloul, women’s rights activist

In Saudi Arabia, women still need a guardian, have to abide to strict dress codes, and can be stoned to death for adultery, or flogged for spending time in the company of a man who isn’t related to them. This year, they were, however, given the right to drive, which earned bin Salman global praise for his “reformer” attitude.

But earlier this year, Saudi driving rights activist Loujain al-Hathlou was kidnapped from Abu Dhabi and forced to return to the country earlier this year. She was later arrested, and is currently being held without charges.

Israa al-Ghomgham, Shia activist

Al-Ghomgham is a peaceful activist of the Shia minority. In 2011, in the context of the Arab Spring, protests spread to claim Shia rights, and al-Ghomgham took part in them, with her husband and other activists. In 2014, she was arrested and held for three years in prison. Only

now is she facing trial under the Public Prosecution, a judicial body that reports directly to the King and is notorious for summary trials that often end in draconian punishments.

The Public Prosecution wants the death penalty for the 29-year-old. Her alleged crimes are “participating in protests,” “attempting to inflame public opinion,” “filming protests and publishing on social media,” and “providing moral support to rioters.” Her final hearing is on Oct. 28.

Samar Badawi and Naseema al-Sadah, women’s rights activists

Both Badawi and Alsada have been arrested several times for protesting for women’s rights and against male guardianship. In 2015, Badawi was detained along with her two-year-old daughter, and this summer, both Badawi and Alsada were detained again, part of nearly a dozen women’s rights activists to be jailed.

They are still being held without trial, by the Presidency of State Security (PSS), a royal body with the official aim to “focus on the security of the nations, citizens and expatriates and counter terrorism, spying and ideological invasions of any kind.”

Raif Badawi, freedom of speech activist

Samar Badawi’s brother Raif, founder of the Free Saudi Liberal blog, was condemned to seven years in prison and 600 lashes in 2007 for his statements online. In 2014, his sentence was extended to 10 more years of prisons and 1,000 lashes, plus a payment of over \$250,000. He was given the first 50 lashes in January 2015, before international outcry and his deteriorating health persuade authorities to suspend the flogging. He is still in detention.

Waleed Abulkhair, human rights lawyer

A human rights activist and lawyer, Waleed Abulkahir was Raif and Samar Badawi’s defender, as well as the head of the Monitor of Human Rights organization. In 2015, he was sentenced to 15 years of prison under laws designed to stop terrorism and cybercrime, after accusations of disrespecting Saudi courts, inciting public opinion and “harming the reputation of the Kingdom.” He is in detention in Jeddah.