

PRESS RELEASE

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BRITISH PARLIAMENTARIANS AND LAWYERS ASK THE SAUDI EMBASSY TO VISIT SAUDI WOMEN ACTIVISTS IN DETENTION IN SAUDI ARABIA

- **UK parliamentarians and international lawyers submit request to the Saudi authorities to visit Saudi Women Activist Detainees in prison to review detention and health conditions**
- **Visit request comes following allegations of torture made by leading human rights organisations**
- **British Parliamentarians and lawyers form Detention Review Panel to review Detainees' health and detention conditions**

LONDON, 2 January 2019 – A cross-party group of British parliamentarians and international lawyers are today requesting the right to visit Saudi women activists detained in Dhahban prison, Saudi Arabia. The lawmakers and advocates – who together have convened a group called the “Detention Review Panel” – intend to produce a detailed testimonial on their findings, following allegations that the Saudi women activists are being tortured and denied access to lawyers or their family members.

The Detention Review Panel’s members are:

Parliamentarians

- **Crispin Blunt MP (Con)**, current Vice-Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Saudi Arabia and the Conservative Middle East Council, former Chair of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, and former Under-Secretary of State for Prisons – Chair of the Detention Review Panel
- **Layla Moran MP (Lib Dem)**, Spokesperson for Education, member of the Public Accounts Committee
- **Dr Paul Williams MP (Lab)**, Member of the House of Commons Health and Social Care Select Committee and a General Practitioner

Advocates

- **Tim Moloney QC, of Doughty Street Chambers**, who will act as the Panel’s legal adviser
- **Tayab Ali, Partner at ITN Solicitors**, who will act as the Panel’s legal secretariat and rapporteur.

Speaking before the Panel formally handed their request for visiting rights to the Saudi authorities via a letter (see appendix) to H.E. Prince Mohammed bin Nawwaf bin Abdulaziz, the Saudi Ambassador to the United Kingdom **Crispin Blunt MP, Chair of the Panel, commented:**

“There are credible concerns that the conditions in which the Saudi women activists are being detained may have fallen significantly short of both international and Saudi Arabia’s own standards. We make this request to the Saudi authorities so that we can assess for ourselves the conditions in which the Saudi Women Activists have been and are being detained today

No person should be subjected to the type of treatment that has allegedly been inflicted upon these women activists while in detention. The implications of activists being detained and tortured for exercising their freedom of speech and conducting peaceful campaigns is concerning for all individuals seeking to exercise their human rights in Saudi Arabia.

Our panel has submitted a request to the Saudi Embassy in London for their assistance in organising a visit to the Saudi women activists detained in Saudi Arabia in order to investigate these allegations. We have requested a prison visit to review the conditions under which they are being held along with permission to carry out an independent medical evaluation of their current health.

We are conscious that our panel meets at a time of unprecedented scrutiny of Saudi Arabia's affairs. We are hopeful that with the cooperation of the Saudi authorities and access to the named detainees and their own accounts that we might at least be able to report a fast-improving situation as regards activists working to improve the overall human rights in the Kingdom. We also hope to find that the treatment of the persons identified in our review is consistent with the relevant parts of both Saudi and international law."

The Detention Review Panel is constituted by ITN Solicitors, on behalf of their client who is a Saudi Arabian citizen.

Speaking today on behalf of his client, Tayab Ali commented:

"Saudi Arabia has, in recent years, been taking steps to promote economic reform and progressive ideals. Removing the restriction on women driving cars was hailed internationally as a sign that the country was moving towards equality for women.

However, the detention and torture of Saudi women activists between May and August 2018, the majority of whom had campaigned for the right to drive, undermines Saudi Arabia's progress and runs contrary to its obligations under international law.

Serious allegations have been made regarding the treatment of these women in detention, including allegations of torture, death threats and denial of access to legal advice. The women have also allegedly been denied access to their families, and their families are deeply concerned about the conditions in which they are being held.

It is incredibly important that the independent panel convened by my client – with legal, medical and foreign policy experience - be allowed to visit the Saudi women detainees and assess the situation."

-Ends-

For more information about the Detention Review Panel – See www.detentionreview.com