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The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Given numerous media reports that you will imminently visit Saudi Arabia and meet with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, we, the undersigned 13 organizations, write to express our deep concerns. Efforts to repair the U.S. relationship with the government of Saudi Arabia without a genuine commitment to prioritize human rights are not only a betrayal of your campaign promises, but will likely embolden the crown prince to commit further violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

We urge your administration to secure genuine progress on human rights before acting in a manner that would bolster the status of the crown prince and his government, which routinely and callously abuses the rights of its own citizens, as well as those of Americans and others around the world.

Mr. President, on the campaign trail, you [promised](#) that your administration would seek to make Saudi Arabia “the pariah that they are” and indicated that “they have to be held accountable.” Indeed, a congressionally mandated report from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence that was declassified by your administration in 2021 [pointed](#) to responsibility at the highest levels of the Saudi government, including of Mohammed bin Salman, for the brutal murder of *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi. Yet there has been no progress toward accountability for his murder, nor for any of the other abuses carried out by the Saudi government.

The crown prince’s government continues to arbitrarily imprison, torture, and execute numerous individuals in violation of the internationally protected rights to a fair trial and due process. Human rights defender [Mohamed al-Rabea](#) has been arbitrarily detained since 2018;

humanitarian aid worker [Abdelrahman al-Sadhan](#) has been sentenced to 20 years in prison and a 20-year travel ban for his tweets and is denied the ability to communicate with his family or lawyers; prominent scholar [Salman Alodah](#) has been in solitary confinement for nearly 5 years and whose charges are connected to his public support for imprisoned dissidents; and physician Dr. [Lina al-Sharif](#) has been imprisoned since May 2021 for promoting human rights online. These are just a few examples of the countless victims in the kingdom's crackdown against peaceful activism and free speech. Meanwhile, in recent years, mass executions have spiked despite [promises](#) to the contrary, with 81 individuals executed in [a single day](#) on March 12, 2022, and more people subjected to state-sanctioned killings already in 2022 than in 2020 and 2021 combined.

These abuses are part of a pattern of behavior increasingly recognized as a global threat to human rights and security. The Saudi government has been linked to the use of [nefarious spyware](#) to surveil peaceful dissidents, [journalists](#), and human rights defenders at home and abroad. The government also [appears](#) to have tracked its citizens as they traveled in the United States by exploiting weaknesses in the global mobile telecommunications network. U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents Walid Fitaihi, Badr al-Ibrahim, Aziza al-Yousuf, and Salah al-Haidar remain under unlawful travel bans, unable to reunite with their families in the United States. Saudi Arabia also engages in state hostage-taking to silence dissidents; Omar and Sara al-Jabri, the [children](#) of former intelligence chief Saad al-Jabri, have spent more than two years unjustly detained and are still in prison despite being only 17 and 18 years old at the time of their arrests.

In the meantime, the Saudi government is passing laws and adopting measures that they hail as historic and progressive but that, in reality, are often limited and are not open for public consultation. For instance, the Family Code passed this year, [lauded](#) by the crown prince as "comprehensive in addressing all the problems that the family and women were suffering from," actually codifies into law existing forms of discrimination, including male guardianship over women. Furthermore, imprisonment and travel bans, including on women's rights activists such as [Loujain al-Hathloul](#) and [Nassima al-Sadah](#), have had a chilling effect on activism and civil society, making promoting or monitoring human rights impossible.

Despite these ongoing concerns, the past weeks have seen multiple meetings between senior Saudi and U.S. officials. A visit by the U.S. president, however, should not come without tangible progress to alleviate some of the most egregious rights violations. We urge you to insist on the following as a prerequisite for any meeting you may have with the Saudi crown prince and in order for the bilateral relationship to be strengthened:

- The immediate release of all political prisoners named in the [2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Saudi Arabia](#);
- Lifting arbitrary travel bans that have been placed on human rights defenders and others, including those levied against U.S. citizens;
- An end to unlawful surveillance and state hostage-taking, and a release of all those detained for these reasons;

- An end to male guardianship over women, and the removal of all discriminatory laws and policies, ensuring that women's rights activists are able to comment on and monitor reforms;
- A moratorium on executions;
- A commitment to maintain the ceasefire in Yemen.

Sincerely,

ALQST for Human Rights  
Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN)  
Freedom House  
The Freedom Initiative  
Freedom Now  
Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)  
Human Rights First  
Human Rights Foundation  
Human Rights Watch  
The James W. Foley Legacy Foundation  
MENA Rights Group  
PEN America  
Project on Middle East Democracy