

**Extract from Capital Punishment in Saudi Arabia: Avenues for Change –**  
[REDACTED], Centre for Capital Punishment Studies, on behalf of the British  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2014

Such international cooperation would also contribute to tackling [REDACTED] through demonstrating to Saudi authorities that foreign nationals are all protected under the same auspices, something akin to the principle of protection by presence, where authorities are less likely to abuse certain nationalities if they know that they are effectively being watched by other nationalities.

The [REDACTED] human rights abuses which have become synonymous with Saudi Arabia are well documented. This report does not seek to endorse any systems which result in human rights abuses.

**[S5] – KEY BEAR TRAPS [possible questions by media]**

**1. [REDACTED] Saudi Arabia's [REDACTED] record on human rights and fundamental freedoms**

**Issue:** [REDACTED] Saudi Arabia's [REDACTED] in human rights: use of the death penalty (including for crimes other than those internationally regarded as the "most serious") and corporal punishment; restrictions on freedom of expression; and limitations on the status of women.

**Background:** The human rights picture in Saudi Arabia is complex. The judiciary are independent [REDACTED]. We make representations, in private, in cases where there are special factors (eg a crime committed by a minor). [REDACTED] There are signs that the space for democratic debate is very slowly widening: social media use is already the higher per capita in the world; and journalists are being given slightly more latitude to write freely. The participation of women in the municipal elections, as voters and candidates, in December was a major, if in itself small, step forward. There are some impressive women in the Majlis Al Shura and in business; Saudi Arabia is 134th out of 145 in the World Economic Forum Gender Gap (above Egypt, Jordan and Morocco among others). [REDACTED]

**HMG's cooperation with Saudi Arabia [REDACTED] regime, [REDACTED]**

**Issue:** Saudi Arabia's absolute monarchy [REDACTED]

**Background:** [REDACTED] The introduction of Saudi Arabia's first tax (on undeveloped land in urban areas) was an important signal. We expect to see further structural changes in 2016. [REDACTED]

**2. UK commercial interests [REDACTED]**

**Issue:** [REDACTED]

**Background:** Saudi Arabia is of course a major trading partner, and Saudi investment into the UK is substantial – but the relationship goes much wider. Defence, security and intelligence cooperation (the last has saved British lives), work in newer areas such as science and innovation, and Saudi students in the UK (15,000 at any one time) are all essential parts of the picture. [REDACTED] Institutions from the Royal Academy of Engineers to the British Museum are increasingly working with Saudi counterparts. All of this provides opportunities to support the reform process; it is through engagement that we will best be able to leverage change. People-to-people contact, whether students or businessmen, is also very important in improving mutual understanding and expanding our range of influence.

**3. [REDACTED]**

**ANNEX B – ANALYSIS TABLE from email of 14 January 2016**

**From:** Gulf Team

**Sent:** 14 January 2016 17:36

**To:** Desk officer, Desk Officer, Desk Officer

**Subject:** MENAD: Human Rights Priority Countries: for Mr Ellwood to clear: revised version

<b>Country: Saudi Arabia</b>
<b>Responsible desk officer: Desk Officer</b>
<b>Human rights contact at Post: BE Riyadh</b>
<b>Gravity of the human rights situation in-country:</b> <i>summarise the severity of particular issues, and the breadth of human rights affected. Candidates for the list will be those countries where the human rights concerns are the most severe, either because of the breadth of human rights affected, or because of particularly serious concerns on specific issues.</i> We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia. This includes the increased use of the death penalty, including issuing death sentences to minors and for crimes which are not deemed the most serious. There is also concern over the limited access to justice as the legal system continues to suffer from long delays in bringing defendants to court and a lack of codification of case law. Women's rights in Saudi Arabia are a concern as they are principally affected by the guardianship system, under which their freedom to participate in society is greatly restricted. Women need the consent of a male relative to travel, work and study. However, there have been some recent incremental improvements. There continues to be restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion or belief. The situation in Saudi Arabia reflects widely-held conservative social values. Non-Muslims are not permitted to worship openly or establish places of worship in Saudi Arabia.
<b>Trajectory of change:</b> <i>is there deterioration in the human rights situation that the UK could help mitigate; or an improvement that the UK could support? Would a deterioration or improvement in the human rights situation potentially lead to changes in the region?</i> The use of the death penalty has increased significantly in the past 12 months, and on 2 January 2016 47 people were executed across Saudi Arabia. However, the principle of the death penalty is enshrined in Saudi Arabia's Sharia law; we therefore assess that abolition of the death penalty is not likely in the near future. We currently focus our efforts on encouraging Saudi Arabia to adhere to the minimum standards defined by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This includes the execution of a minor and the use of the death penalty for a crime which isn't deemed "the most serious". In December 2015 21 women were elected to public office in Saudi Arabia. This municipal election was the first in which women could stand and vote. The UK could support these newly elected women when they take up their new roles. Deputy Crown Prince and Minister of Defence, Mohammed bin Salman, said in an Economist article on 9 January that "We have our values: it is important to us, the participation in decision making; it is important to us to have our freedom of expression; it is important to us to have human rights. We have our own factors and values and principles as the Saudi society and we try to make progress according to our own needs. Our situation today is not the same as it was 50 years ago. Fifty years ago we did not even have a legislative body. Today we have women with good

representation at the parliament, and women do vote and nominate themselves for elections, and today we are making progress. According to our own needs, according to our own pace, and not as a response to any other model.”

[REDACTED]

**Summary of UK engagement on human rights:** *how active is the UK in this country, and how we are able to influence the human rights situation? What is the UK already doing on human rights in the country e.g. UN/UNHRC resolutions, consular work on human rights issues, human rights programme or project work?*

We recognise that any change in the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia will be long term endeavour, but continue to encourage and support incremental steps towards reform. We continue to publicly condemn the use of the death penalty while pressing for UN minimum standards and adhere to the minimum standards defined by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This includes the execution of a minor and the use of the death penalty for a crime which isn't deemed “the most serious. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] withdrawal of the bid by Just Solutions international (JSi) to work with the Saudi Arabian prison service on 13 October 2015. JSi was established in the previous parliament as the internal commercial brand of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in the Ministry of Justice. [REDACTED] The Ministry of Justice decided to withdraw the bid to work with the Saudi Arabian prison service on 13 October 2015.

[REDACTED] follow due legal process. There is also a deep resentment of political interference in judicial system [REDACTED]

**Recommendation:** *HRPC or not?*

*HRPC*

Thu 14/01/2016

Excerpt from briefing pack – press lines June 2015

**1. Is there torture in Saudi Arabia?**

Saudi Arabia has ratified the Convention Against Torture (CAT). However, we continue to receive allegations of torture, in particular from political activists.

We are pressing for a provision to work together to implement the requirements of international obligations, in particular the implementation of human rights conventions. The quasi-independent body, the National Society of Human Rights which reports directly to the King, has free access to all prisons and prisoners to assess claims of torture or abuse.