



## **Saudi Arabia**

Shia Rights Watch Submission for the UN Universal Periodic Review  
31st Session of the UPR Working Group, November 2018

Established in 2011, Shia Rights Watch (SRW) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit research entity and advocacy group headquartered in Washington D.C. USA. SRW works with over 700 local respondents to verify humanitarian news. SRW aims to draw international attention to countries where minority rights, namely that of Shia Muslims, are violated by providing an outlet for freedom of speech. As of 2015, SRW holds an ECOSOC status with the United Nations.

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## Summary

1. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continues to violate the rights of expression, assembly, education, and employment. While the government of Saudi Arabia claims commitments to comply with suggestions made in the 2013 UPR, hindrance of freedom and targeting of minority groups are prevalent.
2. In response to recommendations presented by the 17th session of the UPR in 2013, Saudi Arabia failed to endorse 38 of the 225 recommendations. Saudi Arabia has failed to implement any of recommendations endorsed. Further, contrary to commitments to allow a third-party investigation into human rights violations in the Kingdom and promotion of equal rights, Saudi Arabia has failed to open its doors to human rights endeavors.
3. Anti-Shiism, or the systematic targeting of Shia Muslims, plagues the nation. Increased international awareness of minority rights has allowed a global platform for activism, both in international organizations such as the United Nations, but also inside the nation. However, the government continues suppression of the rights of this group, undermining nations previous commitments to international human rights.
4. In this submission, Shia Rights Watch raises concerns over the systemic discrimination against Shia Muslims as well as the targeting of this group.

## National Framework for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

5. Ratification and endorsement of laws are limited to the approval of the King as per 1992 Basic Law of Government. While a 160-member council dictated by Wahhabi Islamic Law and a Council of Ministers can recommend legislation and law ratification, the monarch is the ultimate power figure in Saudi Arabia.
6. While the Kingdom has made claims to refuse international conventions to uphold its Islamic Laws, the nation has time and time again undermined its own Sharia conventions by carrying out torture and coerced confession.
7. Grassroot participation in humanitarian efforts is not tolerated. Human rights groups are labeled as dissidents and are met with violence.
8. Saudi Arabia further refuses third-party intervention and investigation into its efforts against “terrorism” which is frequently used to limit and elicit violence against critics of the government.



## Freedom of Assembly, Speech, and Expression

9. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia propagates a singular interpretation of Islam- Wahhabism. Non-Wahabbi ideologies are met with the utmost violence. One group significantly affected by the lack of freedom is that of Shia Muslims. Shia Muslims make up the kingdom's largest minority population at 20% estimates. It must be noted that an entirely accurate demographic cannot be announced as members of this religious faith live incognito as they fear expression of their faith will endanger them.
10. Furthermore, the Saudi authorities prohibit the construction of visible Shia mosques and educational centers. Public displays of Shia ritual or faith is met with violence and in many cases, arbitrary detention.
11. Limitations to the rights of assembly climaxed in the nation's most massive military crackdown in the past decade. In May 2016, Saudi forces began demolition of Mousawara, Awamiya, a historic neighborhood in the Eastern Province. By July 26, the town was sealed off. Violence had escalated to point where residents were refrained from leaving their homes in fear of being shot by snipers perched on rooftops. Tens of Shia individuals were killed in the raid of Awamiya, including children.

### Recommendation

- a. Ratification and full enforcement of Covenant of Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- b. End anti-Shia educational efforts
- c. Allow peaceful assembly of Shia Muslims
- d. Allow inclusion of Shia individuals in government and authoritarian positions

## Lack of Due Process

12. Activists and peaceful protesters are met with the ultimate violence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Those suspected to be in anyway active in protests are arrested and detained. Justified by the Law of Criminal Procedure of 2002, activists are held unlawfully and are denied the ability to seek sufficient counsel before the court.
13. Sources report a blind trial, such that those being held under conviction are not even told what they are charged with. Arrests are in the form of enforced disappearance, nightly raids, and arbitrary detention. Those arrested are then held unconditionally in unknown locations where they are tortured and treated inhumanely. Many are later convicted using false confessions, or confessions that have been coerced by torture.

### Recommendation:

- a. Ratification of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICCPED), Convention Against Torture (CAT), and OP-CAT
- e. Alignment of domestic and international human rights standards



- f. Release prisoners held under trials that oppose international standards.
- g. Declare a moratorium on executions
- h. Adopt judicial processes in accordance with international standards.
- i. End enforced disappearances
- j. Investigate allegations of torture and police brutality

#### Propagation of Anti-Shiism in Gulf regions

14. The increased presence of Saudi military, foreign involvement after the Arab Spring has led to the propagation of anti-Shia sentiment beyond Saudi Arabian borders. Not only does the Saudi Arabian government limit their population of Shia citizenry, but it also enforces direct violence against Shia Muslims across the Arabian Gulf.

#### Recommendation

- k. Structuralize anti-discriminatory mechanisms
- l. Reduce religious propagation outside Saudi Arabia
- m. Establish third-party oversight to Saudi Arabian foreign anti-Shia propagation