



Human Rights Council - 25th session

Agenda item 6 - Adoption of the outcome of the UPR of Saudi Arabia

Oral statement

Mr. President,

FIDH welcomes Saudi Arabia's acceptance of recommendations pertaining to access to shelters for victims of domestic abuse and the enforcement of legislation that criminalizes all forms of violence against women, such as the "Protection from Abuse" Act. These are steps in the right direction.

However, these pledges will be meaningless if they are not followed by further commitments and action. In this regard, we regret that Saudi Arabia rejected key recommendations to withdraw general reservations to the **CEDAW convention** and to invite the UN Working Group on **discrimination against women** to visit the country.

We note that while the government accepted some recommendations to make efforts to abolish **institutionalized male guardianship**, this system and the **gender segregation policy**, which are among the root causes of violations of women's rights, remain firmly in place for the time being. Women require permission from their guardians to access government services and resources, enroll in universities, or travel. They suffer from discrimination at all levels, including in marriage, divorce and child custody. We urge the government to immediately revoke the male guardianship system and to remove reservations to the CEDAW convention.

Mr. President,

We are concerned about Saudi Arabia's systematic use of "partial acceptance" of recommendations relating to **civil and political rights**, in particular freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association. We fear this may be a way of avoiding obligations under international law.

In practice, citizens are not allowed to establish independent organizations and **human rights defenders** and peaceful political activists are targeted by the authorities. They face intimidation, threats, travel bans, imprisonment, and even corporal punishment which are cruel, inhuman and degrading. The government has also cracked down on **freedom of expression online** and the courts have sentenced several activists to imprisonment for their use of social media.

We urge the authorities to put an end to the judicial harassment of independent voices and to set a time frame for the adoption of a law on associations in line with international standards.

Thank you for your attention.

