

Letter from the Chairperson

Dear Delegates,

As the Chairperson of the UN Women Council (UNW), I would like to extend a warm welcome to all delegates at QMUN'18. My name is Kishika Arora and I am currently in Class 12 in commerce stream. My key interests are debating, reading, writing and painting. Women's Rights have been a vital issue that the UN has tried to deal with and was further emphasized as one of the Sustainable Development Goals. Many attempts towards gender equality, however, have fallen short of the intended goal. To tackle this issue, the UNW is to draft a Bill of Rights for women across the world. To make the committee more engaging, this year we have modified the committee to include a more varied group of countries. Delegates are expected to adapt to the committee and will be judged on their capacity to lobby, their content and their proposed solutions. They are expected to research extensively and provide detailed and concrete solutions that are pragmatic and can be practiced in real life. Finally, I hope to see you all at QMUN'18 and hope that, along with having a memorable MUN experience, you also enjoy your stay with us!

Sincerely,

Kishika Arora

Chairperson- UNW

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Introduction to the Committee

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports the UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programs, and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas:

- increasing women's leadership and participation;
- ending violence against women;
- engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes;
- enhancing women's economic empowerment;

Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications. Empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth. Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. Women lack access to decent

work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. They are too often denied access to basic education and healthcare. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes.

Over many decades, the United Nations has made significant progress in advancing gender equality, including through landmark agreements such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Working for the empowerment and rights of women and girls globally, UN Women's main roles are:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards, and norms.
- To help Member States implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society.
- To lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality, as well as promote accountability, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

Summarization

The limitation to the freedom to express oneself ensures that women cannot initiate efforts to speak out against laws that violate their rights.

Though women desire to protect their daughters from the Saudi Arabia religious laws that violate their rights, the fear that going against the teachings might result in their deaths keeps them, quiet men. The men are the heads of the families and the final decisions lie with them. Therefore, a woman's objection to some religious practices and beliefs that she may consider to be a violation of her rights is unacceptable in the Saudi society.

With women denied the freedom to express themselves, to make their own decisions, to drive cars, and to make decisions about when and who to marry, access to the modern technology such as the internet

makes it necessary to have the limitation of the freedom addressed.

The women cannot learn about other cultures and beliefs and this limits them to the teachings and beliefs of Islam. This also undermines their right to freedom because the women cannot express and share their opinion about their life experiences

In modern Saudi Arabia, challenging religious practices that violate women's rights is difficult due to the institutionalization of the practices.

The issue of women rights and their violation has triggered debates in various parts of the world. However; some nations have been criticized for allowing gross violation of women rights.



The situation in Saudi Arabia

The phrase "women rights" refers to the entitlement and the freedom that is given to women and girls. Whether women rights are respected in various parts of the world depends on the behavior of members of the society towards women, their status in the society, and their role in the society based on the traditions and beliefs. The ignorance or suppression of the women rights is considered to be one through which the women's rights are violated. Due to the injustice that women have experienced and still continue to experience in the modern society, the issue of women rights has become very important in the society.

Women and their supporters have shown their commitment to promote women rights and to fight against the violation of these rights. Saudi Arabia is an example of a nation that has received criticism for violating women rights. The violation is associated with the religious practices, beliefs, and traditions of the Saudi people. The men in Saudi Arabia are considered to be in the forefront in violating women's rights. In this paper, the issue of women rights violation in Saudi Arabia will be discussed.

The relationship between religion and violation of women rights in Saudi Arabia, violation of women rights in Saudi Arabia has been referred to as the gross violation of basic human rights. Saudi Arabia has been criticized as one of the nations that have allowed men to violate women rights. This has made many women fight for the women rights are to call for concerted action against the violation at the local, national and international levels. Islam as a religion speaks against discrimination and violation of women's rights.

However; it is Islam which is the dominant religion in Saudi Arabia that has been linked to the women rights violation in the country. The Saudi Arabian government is an Islamic absolute monarchy; hence the authority in the country is based on the Islamic religious teachings and beliefs. Some international human rights organizations such as the Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the United Nations Human Rights Committee have issued reports sighting the severe limitation of women rights in the country.

Although the Saudi government denies that it allows the violation of women rights, the Sharia Law that is applied in the country has proved that gross violations of women rights occur in Saudi Arabia. The legal traditions in the country promote the violation of women rights since it is the same Islamic law that violates women rights is used by the state to protect human rights. How women rights in Saudi Arabia are violated According to Blum's article, "A woman's work in progress", there is need to transform the religious beliefs that promote the violation of women's rights in Saudi Arabia.

Just like in other Islamic regimes, Saudi Arabian women are unable to enjoy their freedom which is every individual's right as a human being. The Arab world which includes Saudi Arabia since the ancient time is considered to promote women rights' violation, a situation that makes it necessary to address this problem urgently.

One way through which women's' rights are violated in Saudi Arabia is through honor killings. Women and girls in Saudi Arabia are required to take part in honor killings in order to protect the family's honor. This is accepted in Saudi Arabia even in cases where a woman has been abused by men.

Honor killings in Saudi Arabia are justified by religious teachings and beliefs and are aimed at murdering a woman or a girl who is considered to commit an act that embarrasses or shames the family. Women are killed so that the family shows the community that it has reasserted its control.

This makes the girls unable to access to online websites such as facebook which may be considered to promote immorality. In 2008, a Saudi Arabian father killed his daughter for communicating with a boy on the facebook. This was condemned by human rights activists and organizations. Although the question of whether honor killings are cultural or religious has led to a debate, women in Saudi Arabia are still subjected to it. In Saudi Arabia, women are

strictly expected to wear correct Islamic dresses the failure to this results in severe punishment for women.

Women are expected to cover themselves in public and in Saudi Arabia, the covering of the body is enforced by the mutawwa or the religious police. Although all Muslim women should wear the hijab or the abaya, human rights activists consider it unjust to subject young girls or women to suffering or death simply because they have not won the correct Islamic dress. This has made some Islamic women advocate for change in such ideologies. Women's freedom is limited in Saudi Arabia. This makes it difficult for the Saudi Arabian women to express themselves.



Background

Gender roles in Saudi society come from local culture and interpretations of Sharia (Islamic law). Sharia law or the divine will is derived by scholars through interpreting the Quran and hadith (sayings of and accounts about the Prophet's life). In Saudi culture, the Sharia is interpreted according to a strict Sunni form known as the way of the Salaf (righteous predecessors) or Wahhabism. The law is mostly unwritten, leaving judges with the significant discretionary power which they usually exercise in favor of tribal traditions.

The variation of interpretation often leads to controversy. For example, Sheikh Ahmad Qassim Al-Ghamdi, chief of the Mecca region's mutaween (religious police), has said prohibiting ikhtilat (gender mixing) has no basis in Sharia. Meanwhile, Sheikh Abdul Rahman al-Barrak, another prominent cleric, issued a fatwa (religious opinion) that proponents of ikhtilat should be killed.

According to the *Encyclopedia of Human Rights*, two "key" notions in Islamic legal theory that are mobilized to curtail women's rights in Saudi are:

- sex segregation, justified under the Sharia legal notion of 'shielding from corruption' (*dar al-fasaad*), and
- women's alleged 'lack of capacity' (*adam al-kifaa'ah*) which is the basis of the necessity of a male guardian (mahram) whose permission must be granted for travel, medical procedures, obtaining permits, etc.

"It's the culture, not the religion," is a Saudi saying. At least according to some (Library of Congress) customs of the Arabian peninsula also play a part in women's place in Saudi society. The peninsula is the ancestral home of patriarchal, nomadic tribes, in which separation of women and men, and *namus* (honour) are considered central. Many Saudis do not see Islam as the main impediment to women's rights. According to one female journalist; "If the Quran does not address the subject, then the clerics will err on the side of caution and make it haram (forbidden). The driving ban for women is the best example. Another (Sabria Jawhar) believes that "if all women were given the rights the Quran guarantees us, and not be supplanted by tribal customs, then the issue of whether Saudi women have equal rights would be reduced.

Asmaa Al-Muhammad, the editor for Al Arabiya, points out that women in all other Muslim nations, including those in the Gulf area, have far more political power than Saudi women. The 2013 Global Gender Gap Report ranked several Muslim nations, such as Kyrgyzstan, Gambia, and Indonesia significantly higher than Saudi Arabia for women's equality. However it moved up four places from the last report due to an increase in the percentage of women in parliament (from 0% to 20%), (based on the introduction of a new quota for women in parliament) and had the biggest overall score improvement relative to 2006 of any country in the Middle East.

Saudis often invoke the life of Prophet Muhammad, to prove that Islam allows strong women. His first wife, Khadijah, was a powerful businesswoman who employed him and then initiated the marriage proposal on her own. Another wife, Aisha commanded an army at the Battle of

Bassorah and is the source of many hadiths. Muhammad ended female infanticide and established the first rights for women in Arab culture. He reportedly told Muslim men, "You have rights over your women, and your women have rights over you."

Enforcement and custom vary by region. Jeddah is relatively permissive. Riyadh and the surrounding Najd region, the origin of the House of Saud, have stricter traditions. Prohibitions against women driving are typically unenforced in rural areas.

Enforcement of the kingdom's strict moral code, including hijab and separation of the sexes, is often handled by the *Mutaween* (also *Hai'a*) – a special committee of Saudi men sometimes called "religious police". Mutaween have some law enforcement powers, including the power to detain Saudis or foreigners living in the kingdom for doing anything deemed to be immoral. While the anti-vice committee is active across the kingdom, it is particularly active in Riyadh, Buraydah, and Tabuk.

The 1979 Iranian Revolution and subsequent Grand Mosque Seizure in Saudi Arabia caused the government to implement stricter enforcement of sharia. Saudi women who were adults before 1979 recall driving, inviting non-mahram (unrelated) men into their homes (with the door open), and being in public without an abaya (full-body covering) or niqab (veil). The subsequent September 11 attacks against the World Trade Center in 2001, on the other hand, are often viewed as precipitating cultural change away from strict fundamentalism.

The government under King Abdullah was considered reformist. It opened the country's first co-educational university, appointed the first female cabinet member, and passed laws against domestic violence. Women did not gain the right to vote in 2005, but the king supported a woman's right to drive and vote. Critics say the reform was far too slow, and often more symbolic than substantive. Activists, such as Wajeha Al-Huwaider, compare the condition of Saudi women to slavery.



Current Situation in Saudi

Economic Rights:

According to the International Labor Organization, Saudi women constitute 18.6% of the native workforce. The rate of participation has grown from 15.3% in 1990 to 18.6% in 2011. Other statistical reports quoted by the Al-Riyadh daily newspaper state 14.6% of workers in the public and private sectors of the Kingdom are women. When foreign expatriate workers are included in the total, the percentage of working Saudi women drops further to 6.1%. This compares with over 40% in Muslim nations such as United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Malaysia.

Some critics complain that this constitutes an underutilization of women's skills since females make up 70% of the students in Saudi institutes of higher education. Some jobs taken by women in almost every other country were reserved for men in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi delegation to the United Nations International Women's Year conference in Mexico City in 1975 and the Decade for women conference in Nairobi in 1985 was made up entirely of men.

Educational:

Female literacy is estimated to be 91%, not far behind that of men. In contrast, in 1970, only 2% of women were literate compared to 15% of men. More women receive a secondary and tertiary education than men; 60% of all university graduates in Saudi Arabia are Saudi women, and 50% of working women have a college education, compared to 16% of working men. (Saudi women make up only 13% of the workforce, as at 2015.) The proportion of Saudi women

graduating from universities is higher than in Western countries.

The quality of education is lower for females than males. Curricula and textbooks are updated less frequently, and teachers tend to be less qualified. At the higher levels, males have better research facilities.

Mobility:

Women must show the signed permission from a mahram (close male relative—husband, son, father, uncle or grandson) before she is free to travel, even inside Saudi Arabia. However, out of necessity, most women leave the house alone and often have contact with unrelated men to shop or conduct business.

Many of the laws controlling women apply to citizens of other countries who are relatives of Saudi men. For example, the following women require a male guardian's permission to leave the country: Foreign-citizen women married to Saudi men, adult foreign-citizen women who are the unmarried daughters of Saudi fathers, and foreign-citizen boys under the age of 21 with a Saudi father.

Legal Issues:

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy, with a Consultative Assembly (shura) of lawmakers appointed by the king. Prior to a September 2011 announcement by King Abdullah only men 30 years of age and older could serve as lawmakers. According to his September 2011 announcement, women can now be appointed to the Consultative Assembly. Women first joined the Consultative Assembly in January 2013, occupying thirty seats.

Women could not vote or run for office in the country's first municipal elections in many decades, in 2005, nor in 2011. They campaigned for the right to do so in the 2011 municipal elections, attempting unsuccessfully to register as voters. In September 2011, King Abdullah announced that women would be allowed to vote and run for office in the 2015 municipal elections. Although King Abdullah was no longer alive at the time of the 2015 municipal elections, women were allowed to vote and stand as candidates for the first time in the country's history. According to results released to The Associated Press, 20 female candidates were elected to the

approximately 2,100 municipal council seats being contested. Salma bint Hizab al-Oteibi was the first elected female politician in the country.



Position Paper Guidelines

Position papers are usually one to one-and-a-half pages in length. Your position paper should include a brief introduction followed by a comprehensive breakdown of your country's position on the topics that are being discussed by the committee. A good position paper will not only provide facts but also make proposals for resolutions. A good position paper will include:

- A brief introduction to your country and its history concerning the topic and committee;
- How the issue affects your country;
- Your country's policies with respect to the issue and your country's justification for these policies;
- Quotes from your country's leaders about the issue;

- Statistics to back up your country's position on the issue;
- Actions were taken by your government with regard to the issue;
- Conventions and resolutions that your country has signed or ratified;
- UN actions that your country supported or opposed;
- What your country believes should be done to address the issue;
- What your country would like to accomplish in the committee's resolution; and
- How the positions of other countries affect your country's position.