



# HRC INTERNATIONAL REPORT 2021





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“My primary goal is Saudi Arabia to be an exemplary and leading nation in all aspects, and I will work with you in achieving this endeavor.”

— **King Salman**



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**VISION 2030** is a bold yet achievable blueprint for an ambitious nation. It expresses our long-term goals and expectations and it is built upon our country’s unique strengths and capabilities. It guides our aspirations towards a new phase of development – to create a vibrant society in which all citizens can fulfill their dreams, hopes and ambitions to succeed in a thriving economy.

Therefore, we will not rest until our nation is a leader in providing opportunities for all through education and training, and high quality services such as employment initiatives, health, housing, and entertainment.”

— **Prince Mohammed bin Salman**



# WOMEN'S RIGHTS

## A BRIEF LOOK AT WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR

- The kingdom has made more than 95 ground-breaking reforms in human Rights in the last few years.
- As of 2021, Saudi women own more than 300 thousand businesses.
- Saudi women are CEOs of important companies such as Tadawul and SABB.
- Women can register as head of household, have custody, and legally act on behalf of their children.
- Saudi women have access to every profession, including nightwork and industrial sectors that have been traditionally male-dominated.
- As of 2021, more than 2000 women are working in the Saudi legal system as lawyers, paralegals, prosecutors, and notaries.
- The law ensures women will receive the same wages as men for work of equal value and will be able to retire at the same age as men.
- Saudi women increasingly occupy more important positions such as vice minister, ambassador, and head of university.



MORE THAN  
**1,100**  
FEMALE LAWYERS

**MOJ hires 220 women**, its largest percentage of female employees since inception.

**Dr. Nurah Alamro**, one of the HRC board members, was elected to the UNHRC Advisory Committee.



OVER  
**210**  
FEMALE PROSECUTORS

# 50%

OF SEATS AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION COUNCIL ARE OCCUPIED BY WOMEN

**The Ministry of Justice appoints 100 female notaries.**

**Women can leave prisons, detention centers, and shelters independent of a male guardian.**

**Women join Hajj pilgrimage security forces.**

**Women can live independently.**

**A National Platform for Saudi Women Leaders (Qiyadyat)** was created to facilitate rapid access to female leaders in the public sector, private sector institutions and civil society organizations.

**First female is appointed** as head of co-ed university (Dr. Lilac Al-Safadi, President of Saudi Electronic University).

Public Prosecutor's Office **opens positions for women** as investigators, civil servants, and legal interns.

The Ministry of Justice **opens centers** for safe, private family visitations.

**First female is appointed** to UNESCO (Princess Hayfa Al-Mogrin, Saudi Arabia's permanent female representative to UNESCO).

**First female Deputy Minister of Trade** appointed Dr. Eman Almitairi (Vice-Minister of Commerce).

The Kingdom's first-ever Anti-Harassment Law is introduced, making sexual harassment a criminal offense.

Mixed-gender education is implemented in a number of primary schools.

Women gain the right to drive.

Women are allowed to enter stadiums and other sports facilities.

Mothers are automatically granted custody of their children in absence of dispute in divorce proceedings.



First chairwoman is appointed to the Saudi Arabian Stock Exchange (Sarah Al-Suhaimi).

Alimony Fund is established to support divorced women whose ex-husbands cannot or will not pay alimony.

Public schools begin to offer physical education (P.E.) to girls.

Women's departments are established in enforcement courts.



MORE THAN  
**105,000**

WOMEN BENEFITED FROM  
THE “**AML HUR**” **FLEXIBLE  
WORK HOURS INITIATIVE**  
IN 2019 AND 2020

**Women join the police force.**

The Qurrah initiative is adopted to **provide women in the workplace with daycare support**, benefiting over 2,500 women per year.

Women can **independently access government-run services** (including healthcare, financial, and legal services).

The Wusool initiative is adopted to **provide women in the workplace with transportation support**, benefiting over 56,000 women each year.

Saudi female athletes join the Olympic Games.

The Minister of Justice issues a circular requiring marriage registrars to give the wife a copy of her marriage contract to ensure awareness of her rights.

Regulations are strengthened to require equal pay for equal work between men and women.

The Kingdom launched a domestic violence hotline (1919).

The Family Affairs Council, which includes the Women's Committee, is created and tasked with "reviewing policies, building partnerships and adopting initiatives and programs to promote the status of women and empower them socially, economically and cognitively to ensure the sustainability of their family stability."

The Ministry of Justice and the Mawada Association launched a joint program providing free legal advice to women in personal status and domestic violence cases.



MORE THAN  
**65,000**  
WOMEN BENEFITED FROM  
FREE LEGAL SUPPORT



# Vision 2030

SET COMMITMENT TO  
**INCREASE WOMEN'S  
PARTICIPATION IN THE  
WORKFORCE TO AT  
LEAST 30%.** CURRENTLY,  
THIS WAS ACHIEVED  
WITH **32% OF WOMEN**  
IN THE WORKFORCE.



**WOMEN WIN THE RIGHT  
TO VOTE AND RUN AS  
CANDIDATES IN MUNICIPAL  
ELECTIONS.**



**CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

The Council of Ministers adopted the Kingdom's first-ever national policy and national plan to prevent child labor. The national policy also includes the creation of a database to track child labor violations.

Abolishment of the death penalty for crimes committed while minors made retroactively applicable to cases decided before 2018.

People under 18 years of age may not be married without consent from a specialized court.

OVER  
**8,000**  
CALLS RECEIVED BY THE  
CHILD HELPLINE IN 2021

**The Juvenile Law** mandates that a juvenile who commits an offense that is generally punishable by death, shall instead receive a prison sentence for a maximum of ten years.

**Establishment of the Family Affairs Council, which includes the Children's Committee,** to help children enjoy a "healthy, safe and meaningful life."

**The General Commission for the Guardianship of Trust Funds for Minors and their Counterparts** took steps to allocate funds for orphans and children of unknown parents.

**THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION LAUNCHED THE ANTI-BULLYING PROJECT AT SCHOOLS.**



**CREATION OF A DEDICATED, 24-HOUR HOTLINE TO RECEIVE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CALLS AND COMPLAINTS (1919).**



## RIGHT TO WORK & WORKERS' RIGHTS

**The Council of Ministers** approved the preliminary steps for signing Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labor Convention, 1930 (P029).

**Foreigners whose residence permits have expired** as of the date of their expiry are exempted from paying required fees to extend residency permits during the pandemic.

**Government paid 60% of private-sector Saudi employees' salaries for a period of three months** to minimize the impact of COVID-19, amounting up to SAR 9 billion (approx. 2.4 billion USD).



MORE THAN  
**307,000**

CALLS RECEIVED BY THE  
MULTI-LINGUAL CALL CENTER  
FOR EXPAT WORKERS

**Foreign workers whose contracts end or whose employers go bankrupt can be registered** on Ajeer to find other employment opportunities in the country, instead of being repatriated.

**The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development allocated SAR 17.3 million (approx. 4.6 million USD)** to maintain employment during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Labor Reform Initiative (LRI) was launched on November 4th 2020 to improve the contractual relationship between workers and employers. The LRI allows job mobility and regulates the issuance of exit and re-entry visas. Under the new system, private-sector workers will be able to transfer their own employment, exit and re-enter the country, and arrange for their final exit visas without requiring the employer's consent. It applies to all expatriate workers in the private sector and includes specific control measures put in place to take into account the rights of both parties of the contractual relationship. These reforms came into effect on March 14th of 2021.



Expanding the services provided under the MUSANED platform from the previous year to include electronically verified contracts since July 2019.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development's hotline (19911) started to receive trafficking-related complaints. Currently, the hotline operates in many languages.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MoHRSD) mandates the use of the recruitment platform MUSANED in 8 countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Uganda).

Night-shift workers' rights, **benefits regulated.**

**Wages Protection System** safeguards workers from fraud and payment delays.



Ministry of Human Resource  
and Social Development

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



TO REINFORCE  
**EQUALITY AND PREVENT  
DISCRIMINATION EXPANDED.**

**Launch of electronic verification platform** for registering the contracts of private-sector foreign workers through the General Organization for Social Insurance (GOSI).

**Launch of the Arabic-language “Together We Identify” smartphone app** to receive trafficking complaints from any resident of Saudi Arabia (English version launched in 2019).



**Employers must register domestic workers for Household Payroll Cards,** which document payments and act as debit cards for wage withdrawal.

**Saudi Arabia partners with Bangladesh** to provide a Comprehensive Information and Orientation Program to incoming guest workers.

**Multilingual call center set up** for complaints, suggestions, queries from foreign workers.

**Labor Advisor app** facilitates access for foreign workers to work-related information.



**RIGHT TO JUSTICE**

**On February 8th 2021, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced four upcoming legislative reforms** that will contribute to the ongoing codification of the Kingdom's judicial system: the Penal Code for Discretionary Sanctions, the Law of Evidence, the Personal Status Law, and the Civil Transactions Law. The introduction of the laws will help create a more efficient judicial process with more legal certainty, accountability, and oversight.

The Evidence Law has been issued under royal decree M/43 dated December 30th 2021 which will achieve a major qualitative leap in the judicial legislation system and contribute to the promotion of justice to protect society, individuals, rights, and property.

Flogging abolished for all discretionary (ta'zir) punishments, which shall be limited to prison sentences or any other sentences in accordance with law.

The Public Prosecution launched an online platform to receive reports of violations of detainees' rights.

All judicial hearings at the criminal court in Riyadh are audiovisually recorded in accordance with public hearing principle.

System of litigation at appellate courts codified for the first time.



**Additional safeguards introduced** to ensure that criminal courts only imposes punishments after all appeals have been exhausted.

**Criminal courts assumed jurisdiction** over all elements of criminal justice.

**Specialized (commercial, labor, and personal status) courts established throughout the Kingdom**, specialized panels established at general courts, and specialized appeal panels established in a number of major cities.

**Specialized circuits at the Public Prosecution branch offices** established to deal with family issues.



Human rights department established at the General Directorate of Prisons.

The Public Prosecution becomes an independent body.

The Council of Ministers adopted a resolution sharply curbing the powers of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (religious police).

**RIGHT TO EDUCATION**

“ We’re not doing gender equality because the West wants it, or because it will target Human Rights Watch and get them off our backs, or because Amnesty International is going to say, ‘Great, good job.’ We’re doing it because it is right.”

– HRH Ambassador  
Reema bint Bandar Al Saud  
Saudi Ambassador to the  
United States



Activation of the remote education, during the COVID19 pandemic crisis, and several initiatives contributions aimed at promoting the right to education have been launched, including the "We Are All Giving" initiative, which included providing students with free SIM cards and tablets.

Physical Activity Initiative inaugurated to promote health of female students.

Lifelong Learning Initiative promotes adult literacy.





## RIGHT TO HEALTH

Major increase in primary health care centers throughout Saudi Arabia.

National Center for Mental Health Promotion established to raise awareness and expand access to treatment and rehabilitation.

New regulation to prevent HIV spread, and protect rights and duties of HIV-positive persons.

Saudi Patient Safety Center established to eliminate preventable harm and malpractice in the healthcare system.





## ANTI-TRAFFICKING EFFORTS

### LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM

The NRM specifies and coordinates the roles and responsibilities of all relevant Saudi authorities in the identification and protection of victims and the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators. It also provides immediate and long-term support measures for trafficking victims, including assistance to either stay in the country, voluntary return and reintegration, or voluntary resettlement in another country.

Following a decision by the Ministry of Justice, **specialized anti-trafficking circuits were created across the Kingdom.**

**The Public Security** established specialized anti-trafficking units.

**National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking** launched national plan to combat human trafficking crimes (2021 - 2023).

**A National Team is created**, comprised of representatives from all National Committee to Combat Trafficking member entities and covering all 13 regions in the Kingdom.

The Public Prosecution established 14 specialized anti-trafficking circuits across the country.



## RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN CULTURAL LIFE

“ Culture helps disseminate human knowledge, exchange experiences and expertise. It opens dialogue and cultural exchange, widens horizons for interaction and positive influence between peoples.”

— Human Rights Commission



THE MINISTRY OF  
MEDIA APPROVED FIRST  
LICENSES TO CINEMAS.



CO-ED MUSIC  
CONCERTS ALLOWED.



## FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

**Products relating to foreign holidays** are widely and openly sold, including Christmas trees and Valentine's Day roses.

**Saudi public-school textbooks** removed many instances of language that were unfavorable to non-Muslims.

**Inauguration of the Community Fund** to support civil society organizations and enhance the nonprofit sector in all of the Kingdom's regions.

# FIRST-EVER DELEGATION OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS WAS HOSTED BY THE KINGDOM.

**Crown Prince met with Coptic-Christian Pope Tawadros II** and the first Coptic mass was held in Saudi.

**Crown Prince met with head of the Anglican church** in London.

**Crown Prince met with French cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran**, who heads the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, in Riyadh.



Crown Prince met with Lebanese Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros I-Rai in Riyadh.

Issuance of the Audiovisual Media Law in 2017, which asserted the freedom of opinion and expression in a manner consistent with relevant rules and regulations.

Requiring all governmental entities in 2017 to publish draft internal bills, rules and regulations, and decisions on their websites so that relative entities and people can provide their feedback.



## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Free testing and treatment provided for all COVID-19 patients** including citizens and residents, including those in violation of residency laws.

**Hundreds of non-violent immigration violators were released** to decongest prisons and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in detention facilities.

**Loan repayments suspended** for all public/private-sector health workers.

**The Kingdom was one of the first countries in the world to suspend non-essential public businesses and gatherings** (markets and shopping malls closed, excluding pharmacies and foodstuff markets) alongside a phased suspension and limitation of gatherings.

**Saudi to give USD 133,333** to the families of all Saudi/non-Saudi frontline health workers who died fighting COVID-19.

**Travel limitation and quarantine measures enacted** (phased travel suspensions, isolation of hotspots), with exceptions for humanitarian and exceptional cases. Citizens stranded abroad provided with accommodation and medical and psychological resources.

**Socially-distanced Hajj** took place with 10,000 pilgrims.

**Residency permits** for foreigners renewed free of charge.



## HUMANITARIAN AID & RELIEF

Kingdom convened an extraordinary virtual summit meeting to unify efforts to fight the pandemic as part of its G20 Presidency, pledges USD 500 million to international organizations to fight the pandemic, USD 10 million in emergency funding to the World Health Organization (WHO), and provides medical equipment and aid to several countries.

“ Vision 2030 is not just a program for economic reform, it is a true effort at national transformation. We aim to create a more vibrant society, thriving economy, and an ambitious nation.”

— Prince Faisal bin Farhan  
Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen started providing security, transportation, education, healthcare assistance.



# RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



## SIGN LANGUAGE SERVICE STARTED ON ALL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE PREMISES.

Accession to the Marrakesh Visually Impaired Persons Treaty.

Commission for Care of People with Disabilities established to improve services, education, treatment, rehabilitation, and employment.

'Yaseer' program launched for people with mental disabilities.

National strategy for education of persons with disabilities.





## RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

“ We are confident that Saudi Arabia will live up to its objectives in creating a better quality of life for all of its citizens and residents as part of the continuous stream of reforms provided by Vision 2030, under the leadership of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman.”

— Human Rights Commission

National Environment Strategy, National Water Strategy, and Food Safety Strategy unveiled to spur sustainable development.

The "Citizen Account" program was created to cushion the impact of economic reforms on families.

Saudi Vision 2030 is launched to improve quality of life for all citizens and residents.

