



معهد شؤون الخليج

Institute for Gulf Affairs

Behind the Veil

The State of Women in Saudi Arabia

BY: KELLY LE BENDER

DECEMBER 2013

The guardianship law strips individual women of their personal autonomy by placing them under the custody of their closest male relative -- Kelly Le Benger



The Institute for Gulf Affairs

1900 L Street NW, Suite 309
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 466-9500
www.gulfinstitute.org

About IGA

The Institute for Gulf Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan, tax exempt organization that disseminates reliable information about the Gulf region (the Gulf Cooperation Council countries plus Iraq) and produces thoughtful analyses of Gulf politics and international relations. Based in Washington, DC, the Institute is at the center of a global network of reliable individuals, some of whom, due to the closed nature of the Saudi and Gulf political systems, have no other outlet for their views. In order to fulfill this mission, the Institute:

- Convenes conferences in Washington, where informed analysts debate major issues concerning the Gulf countries and US-Gulf Relations.
- Conducts independent research and investigations, reports of which are posted on this website: www.gulfinstitute.org
- Fosters a deeper understanding of the Gulf countries among Washington and international policymakers and members of the press corps by providing them with up-to-date and exclusive information, and by putting them in contact with reliable analysts.
- Sponsors task forces whose reports help define the foreign policy agenda.

About the Author

Kelly LeBenger is a Senior Political Analyst at the Institute for Gulf Affairs. She graduated Magna Cum Laude with a degree in International Relations with a concentration in Middle Eastern Studies from the Elliot School of International Affairs at The George Washington University. She was the coordinator of the No Women No Play campaign in 2011. She is currently living in New York City.

Saudi Arabia is largely a closed off society and despite its controversial appeal many Americans do not have accurate knowledge of how the Kingdom operates socially and professionally in regard towards women. In Saudi Arabia a single passage of the Qur'an has institutionalized the customary practice of male guardianship over women. This component of Shari'a law eradicates any sense of female personal freedom by requiring all women to be placed under the custody of a male relative. Despite the existence of male guardianship Saudi women have been able to expand their traditional role in the home outward into the public sphere in a limited capacity. This trend is facilitated by the broadening of the Kingdom's sex-segregation policy, which is producing two results: first, it is greatly improving the ability of Saudi women to posture for reform, and second, it is contributing to a progressing normalization of and acceptance for a greater domestic female social role.

The goal for those interested in the liberation of Saudi women is the eradication of the guardianship practice. This is possible through the reexamination and reinterpretation of the legitimizing Qur'anic verse by the national Islamic authority. Precedent in the case of child marriages reveals that the Kingdom has reassessed its interpretation of certain Shari'a laws in response to changes in domestic attitudes towards societal norms. Thus, while many actors within the international community have advocated against Saudi's policy of sex-segregation, the international community should in fact encourage the expansion of the female sphere of activities.

Through the development of sex-segregation policy not only have Saudi women been able to better organize their approach for self-advocacy but in addition, the introduction of women into previously male-only fields has also allowed for a slow, yet necessary, organic cultural shift in societal attitudes towards the expanded female role. With support from the international community, these two domestic developments have the potential to generate enough social change to pressure the Kingdom to actively remove its system of male guardianship.

Background on Saudi Social Law

Saudi Arabia relies on its right of religious sovereignty to justify its domestic conditions for

women. The Qur'an and the Sunna are the highest authority in the Islamic state, and are interpreted by official Islamic scholars, known as 'Ulama. Saudi social organization derives from the country's distinct interpretation of Shari'a law, which is based on the most conservative understanding, the Hanbali School of law.¹ Shari'a law in Saudi Arabia is not codified in modern context, thus 'Ulama can apply the law on a case by case basis through legal judgments called fatwa.

In the Kingdom the concept of male guardianship over women is developed from a single passage of the Qur'an. This passage, Sura 4 Verse 34, states, "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means."² The Kingdom relies on this passage to supersede other verses in the Qur'an that support gender equality and women's freedoms to enforce a nation-wide, customary policy of male guardianship.³ By way of this policy all women are placed under the authority of a specific male guardian.

The guardianship law strips individual women of their personal autonomy by placing them under the custody of their closest male relative. This male relative becomes the woman's official guardian, or *wali al-amr*, and assumes all of her decision-making responsibilities. In Saudi Arabia women of all ages must acquire the permission of their rightful male guardian in order to attend school, work, marry, receive medical treatment, travel, or obtain personal identification.⁴ The law of male guardianship is not legally prescribed - as Shari'a law is not codified in a modern context - however its practice is nearly universal inside of the Kingdom and the law affects the lives of all Saudi women.⁵

The conditions and consequences of the guardianship policy on Saudi women vary case by case. While the policy can be merely inconvenient for some, it can be debilitating and life threatening for others. For example, in 2006 a woman was admitted to the hospital after being shot by her guardian -her husband. As is often the case, she was told by police that they were unable to intervene unless an official complaint was filed by her male guardian. As expected, the woman's husband would not file a complaint against himself and so the abuse continued. Following her release the woman was re-admitted to the hospital on two more separate accounts for new gunshot wounds inflicted on her by her husband. The

police still did not intervene and on the third time she was admitted to the hospital her injuries were fatal.

⁶ The case of this woman's death is unfortunately, not unusual.

In Saudi Arabia 74% of all guardianship related cases reported to the government-controlled National Society for Human Rights – the Kingdom's largest agency for human rights – deal with physical and psychological violence.⁷ A significant number of complaints have also reported guardians denying rights to education, marriage, employment, and even access to children.⁸ Despite the Government's establishment of organizations like the NSHR, the nature of the guardianship law inherently prevents victims of abuse to escape their aggressors or seek help. [In addition, numerical information accounting for the number of women and children suffering from guardianship abuse is deficient due to the process of filing a complaint and the nature of the system.]

In 2009, Zaid Al-Hussain, vice president of Saudi Arabia's Human Rights Commission headed the Saudi delegation of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review under the UN. In the Review Saudi Arabia officially acknowledges, "In actual practice, the concept of guardianship...often loses its connotation of responsibility and care, which are transformed into domination and coercion."⁹ Despite this assessment King Abdullah has not addressed this issue and has kept the guardianship system intact. The government's only subsequent action was to deliver a series of nominal and unenforced adjustments to the law.¹⁰ Such a modification is reflected in the decision of the Ministry of the Interior that women over the age of 45 would be permitted to travel without guardian permission. In practice airport officials have not respected this ruling and continue to demand proof of permission for travel from women in this category.¹¹

Sex Segregation Reform and Opportunities for Female Empowerment

In spite of the guardianship system many Saudi women are improving their quality of life, adjusting intolerant social views and challenging government policies that are keeping them from receiving equal treatment under the law by utilizing the opportunities provided to them through the female sphere via sex segregation reform. Over the last 50 years women's education and daily activities

in Saudi Arabia have changed; this transformation has led to the development of a “female sphere,” in which women are able to pursue interests outside of the home.¹² During the 1960s the government first imposed sex segregation in the area of education- developing the first localized female specific institutions to offer girls schooling.¹³ Women’s entry into education proliferated with the opening of several additional female-schools and institutions of higher education around the country. Women continued to enter university at an alarming rate – with an annual rate of increase of 8% over the period from 1975-2002. As a result, the gender gap in enrollment in university and secondary levels was closed in 2002 and at the primary level in 2003. Since then, women’s participation has continued to increase and now women outnumber men in higher education composing roughly 57% of all graduate students.¹⁴

The increase in educated women that resulted from the early education reform paired with increased segregation laws during the 1980s and 1990s led to “the emergence of a female sphere of activities,” that has come to encompass many additional sectors of society.¹⁵ This sphere of activities stands to serve the ambitions of many Saudi women whose goals continue past access to education. The newest generation of educated women desire to be “financially independent [and] to live an active professional life rather than ‘being bored’ at home.”¹⁶ The emergence of educated Saudi women facilitated the development of female labor opportunities. During the 1960s the government became the first employer of women, recruiting women to education and health care services within public departments. Still today, the government remains the primary employer of women - employing over 200,000 women, composing 30% of all government employees. In specific, 83% of female government employees work for the Ministry of Education and 5.4% work for the Ministry of Health.¹⁷

Although female jobs remain concentrated in the education and health care fields more opportunities in additional sectors of society have become available to women with the expansion of sex segregation. In 1980 Al Rajhi Bank opened the first female bank branch and within two years 13 more appeared in Riyadh and Jeddah.¹⁸ In addition, sex segregation policies created female-only institutions for consumption allowing for the development of a female market.¹⁹ The female market not only facilitated

female employment opportunities in male owned businesses but also allowed women to enter into commercial investment and start their own enterprises.

As of 2011 commercially registered firms owned by women account for 4.7% of all businesses registered with the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, totaling over 22,500 businesses. In particular, 80% of female-owned enterprise involves wholesale and retail trade, foodstuffs trade or readymade clothing and textiles trade. Other areas of female business include import/export, construction, tailoring, restaurants and furniture.²⁰ In addition, because women have only been able to open a business under their name since 2004 there are many commercial enterprises run by women but have been registered by men or are not registered at all. This accounts for the informal female economy which is expansive and includes “catering operations, hairdressing and beauty salons, tailoring outlets, handicrafts factories and, increasingly, services such as graphics, web design and event management.”²¹ Ultimately, however women comprise less than 14% of the Saudi work force, and thus their role in the economy cannot be overstated.²²

Al Edrisi, CEO of Eastern Forum Company and female member of the Eastern Province Chamber of Commerce, encourages women to use education as a tool of individual empowerment and to take advantage of the opportunities before them to increase their participation in the economy. Edrisi explains that the passion young Saudi women feel towards this issue has been driving them to excel and succeed in the country in spite of their low numbers in the workforce.²³ While Saudi women express the desire to seek change and have begun developing strategies to achieve their goals, their options and prerogatives remain limited. The lack of employment opportunities for women in the Kingdom is a major concern. In the 8th development plan the government acknowledges the overwhelming female demand for more jobs and the lack of employment opportunities provided to them. In order to deal with this issue the government states its intention to enact new regulations or amend existing ones “in order to facilitate and encourage expansion of women’s participation in economic activities.”²⁴ Despite this, the 9th development plan only delineates vague policy adjustments and fails to include specific details and timelines.²⁵

Consequently, the international community must pressure Saudi Arabia to follow through on these objectives as the growth of the female sphere is vital to the status of women and has produced important outcomes for the women's movement.

The Development of Empowered Businesswomen

One significant result of the female sphere has been to produce prominent female leaders that have been instrumental in advancing the position and prerogatives of the Saudi women's movement. Saudi businesswomen have been able to utilize their professional positions to organize and mobilize the women's lobby. These women have established a distinct professional identity that distinguishes them from other employed women and affords them with additional influence and legitimacy. This sort of progress is exemplified in the establishment of businesswomen centers in most regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Although many of these centers remain largely symbolic some, for example the center in Jeddah, have produced substantive efforts.

In 2005, four businesswomen earned spots on the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry Board affording them the opportunity to negotiate for women's rights from a government platform.²⁶ In effect the Chamber's female-branch, The al Sayedah Khadijah bint Khuwailid Businesswomen Center, has been able to successfully host several forums to discuss the issue of women's employment; such as the 2004 forum entitled: "Capacity Building, Developing People for Sustainable Growth". In this forum the Chamber hosted roughly 2,000 attendees, of which several hundred were women. The forum was led by Saudi Labor Minister Ghazi Al-Gosaibi and although they were seated behind a glass wall partition, the female attendees were highly vocal in the forum, asking questions and making comments regarding restrictive government policies that hinder female employment. A number of female participants not only challenged the Labor Minister but also offered suggestions for improvement.²⁷

The center has also been successful in publishing reports that address government inefficiencies related to women's work. Through these reports empowered businesswomen have promoted the female agenda by directly communicating with the central government. For example, in 2010 Saudi

businesswomen Noura Alturki and Rebekah Braswell in conjunction with the al Sayedah Khadijah bint Khuwailid Businesswomen center, the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Monitor Group, published a report to be utilized by the government in order to create a more efficient female economy. The report entitled, “Businesswomen in Saudi Arabia: Characteristics, Challenges, and Aspirations in a Regional Context,” addresses the current conditions for women’s work in the Kingdom and relevant government policies pertaining to women. The report also targets specific problems in current Saudi reform measures. For example, the report asserts that Royal Decree 120, which was issued in 2003 by the Saudi Council of Ministers in order to provide businesswomen with access to government services by “requiring all relevant government entities to open female sections,” is actually counterproductive as “many businesswomen consider the female sections to be an added layer of bureaucracy instead of a “one-stop shop” that facilitates their requests.”²⁸ The report identifies the main challenges facing female businesses to be “unclear regulations and policies,” the heavy reliance on male guardians for the business registration process, and female-specific challenges resulting from extra restrictions and requirements placed on businesswomen but not on businessmen.”²⁹ These issues stem from male guardianship and the underdevelopment of the female sector. The recommendations seek to loosen guardianship policies and to strengthening sex segregation policies through the delineation of rules and regulations for the female sector and the development of parallel female-institutions.

The publication of the report itself, regardless of its content, reflects significant progress in the organization of the women’s movement - a progress made possible by the opportunities provided to women through the female sphere. The report is 65-pages long and is supported through out by reputable citations and statistical data. The report is expertly written and it is clear that the authors are highly educated. The report also is presented from the angle of promoting Saudi national interest. These considerations illustrate Saudi women’s newfound ability to develop their own strategies to persuasively advocate for their rights. The progress seen by the Jeddah businesswomen is reflective of the overall progress women have made through their utilization of the female sphere. Through the professional female sector women have been able to rise to prominent ranks and assume positions of influence. This

development may not have been possible if women were made to compete in pre-existing male institutions.³⁰

Saudi Women and Access to Islam

The female sphere of activities in Saudi Arabia is not limited to education and business, it also includes religious space. Islam is central to the Saudi State and thus Saudi women's utilization of the female religious sphere is vital to the success of the women's movement. Saudi women's understanding of Islam will not only allow them to better define their goals using religious discourse but will also allow them to establish more efficient dialogue with the Saudi religious establishment.³¹

Traditionally, Saudi women were excluded from engaging in religious scholarship and, with the exception of Ramadan, women are still excluded from attending mosque.³² However in 1971 religious study became accessible to women when the first female institution for religious learning was opening at Umm al-Qurra University.³³ Since then other universities have established female branches for Islamic study. Subsequently in the 1990s Islamic female institutions were opened providing women with further opportunities to access Islam. In turn, the female religious sphere has given way to the emergence of prominent female preachers and Islamic Intellectuals.³⁴ Female preachers have traditionally avoided challenging official Ulama doctrine and discussing the role of women in Saudi society, however where female preachers have remained quiet female Islamic intellectuals, like Suhayla Zayn al-Abidin, have become increasingly vocal and by employing their extensive knowledge of religion and religious discourse have been able to develop strong Islamic based arguments for women's rights and arguments against Saudi interpretations of Islamic texts.³⁵ This is demonstrated in one of al-Abidin's arguments against male guardianship:

“Islam, gives women substantial rights, [even] more rights than western women have. But traditions and patterns of thought that have nothing to do with religion are predominant in Saudi Arabia. Women are entitled to use their money. That was already the case with the wives of the

prophet. They carried out transactions without consulting him, but we need a tutor (mahram).

What we demand is a return to true Islam.”³⁶

As previously mentioned the interpretation of Suna 4 verse 34 can, theoretically, be reexamined.

Thus it is imperative that these women continue to challenge the Saudi interpretation.

International Influence on the Domestic Condition

The international community must tailor its approach to better support the domestic agenda of Saudi women. The approach of Non-Governmental Organizations has been to encourage all-encompassing, one-size-fits-all reform initiatives however the demand for a sweeping liberal transformation in Saudi Arabia is impractical and ineffective. The international community must pressure the Kingdom on manageable demands that will not contradict the legitimacy of the Islamic regime. The abolition of the guardianship law is an achievable goal in the short and long term that will convey a maximum effect on the lives and status of Saudi women while allowing the regime to maintain its legitimacy and avoid large-scale social upheaval. As stated previously, the basis of Saudi guardianship law is developed from a line found in Sura 4 verse 34 of the Quran, which states, “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means.”³⁷

Currently Saudi ‘Ulema have interpreted this verse to call for male guardianship over women, however Qur’an analysis has developed through time and can be subject to reinterpretation. For example, forced marriages in Saudi Arabia were once accepted under Shari’a law, however in 2005, the Grand Mufti Abdulaziz al-Shaykh announced that forced marriages are against Shari’a law and declared them illegal. Through the decision to reexamine forced marriage the Kingdom sought to reduce its increasing divorce rates and was thus motivated by changing social conditions.³⁸ Al-Shaykh’s abolition of forced marriage demonstrates the Saudi regime’s predilection to act self-interestedly rather than traditionally. Thus, under the weight of significant pressure the Saudi government will be inclined to reexamine its understanding of guardianship.

In addition to pressuring for the removal of the guardianship law NGOs must also acknowledge the benefits of sex segregation policy for women and encourage the government to increase available employment opportunities in the female sphere. Accordingly, groups must also encourage the Kingdom to codify rules and regulations concerning female business in order to ensure against exploitation. The Saudi government has a strong relationship with the private sector and business interests weigh heavily in Saudi domestic, as well as international, policy.³⁹ If women continue to obtain significant positions within the private sector their abilities to develop their influence domestically and renegotiate their positions for self-empowerment will increase.

Among the various international actors NGO groups, particularly Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have been best in targeting the fundamental issues underlying the plight of Saudi women. These groups focus on specific issues and call for explicit reform measures. Most importantly these groups have identified the guardianship law as the most significant obstacle to women's rights and have publicized its impediment of basic human rights.

In addition, as King Abdullah's initiatives have remained largely symbolic and he has not made any significant efforts to dismantle the guardianship system⁴⁰, the international community must expose inconsistencies in government discourse and policy and must regularly assess the efficiency of new Saudi reform initiatives to ensure against window-dressing. While providing analysis and drawing public attention to the issue has been the first step in addressing the plight of Saudi women it is necessary for the international community to adopt a proactive platform against the Kingdom's violation of female rights. The most significant problem in the role of the international community in regard to women's rights in Saudi Arabia thus far has been the placating approach of the United States. While the United States government has publically promoted a committed stance on the spread of women's rights abroad it has consistently disavowed this policy with regard to Saudi Arabia in order to strengthen national economic and political interests.

In June 2011, in a rare display of protest a group of Saudi Women in Riyadh rallied against the female ban on driving. Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, whom has built her political career on a

strong platform for female empowerment, failed to immediately recognize the event. Instead she remained neutral, an act State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland described as “quiet diplomacy,”⁴¹ which had a coalition of Saudi women's rights activists, Saudi Women for Driving, asking the Secretary, “Where are you when we need you most?”⁴² Then when Saudi Arabia banned women from voting in the 2011 municipal elections, despite King Abdullah’s earlier promise of their inclusion, Secretary Clinton failed again to comment on the issue. Yet Secretary Clinton did deliver a strong affirmation on behalf of the US government on the inclusion of women in politics in regard to Egypt and Tunisia: “The United States will stand firmly for the proposition that women must be included in whatever process goes forward. No government can succeed if it excludes half of its people from important decisions.”⁴³

While Clinton’s reference to citizenry exclusion from important decisions most clearly applies to the current social condition facing women in Saudi Arabia, Clinton purposefully did not make a direct association. A similar situation exists in regard to US regional development; for example the Middle East Partnership Initiative launched projects to promote female political participation in Morocco and Kuwait - two countries that already accept women suffrage - but failed to do so in Saudi Arabia.⁴⁴

HRW reported in 2010 that “US pressure for human rights improvements [in Saudi Arabia] was imperceptible,” while the efforts of America’s closest ally, the UK, demonstrated “through the Two Kingdoms Dialogue to protect human rights had no tangible effect, if such efforts were made at all.” In addition, the overall application of pressure from Western states on challenging the Kingdom’s refusal to ratify certain elements of the CEDAW treaty has been weak and ineffective.⁴⁵

The most recent US response to progress in the Saudi women’s movement attempts to sever US participation and support for the issue entirely. On November 5th, 2013 Secretary of State John Kerry, in responding to the recent Saudi protest against the ban on female driving, established an entirely detached US foreign policy on the issue remarking, “[I]t’s no secret that in the United States of America we embrace equality for everybody, regardless of gender, race, or any other qualification... but it’s up to Saudi Arabia to make its own decisions about its own social structure.” Kerry then asserts “There’s a

healthy debate in Saudi Arabia about this issue, but [he does not] think that debate is best left to Saudi Arabia.”⁴⁶

Kerry’s response reflects the general approach taken by Western officials - a policy of appeasement, and now even apathy, for the Kingdom’s slow-paced and ineffectual reform measures concerning the status of women. Furthermore many of these officials, like Secretary Clinton and Secretary Kerry actually reinforce ineffective projects through both “quiet diplomacy”⁴⁷ and baseless praise. This phenomenon is especially clear in the case of the Saudi National Dialogue initiatives - the nationally institutionalized forum for debate, which Secretary Kerry has referred to as “healthy”.⁴⁸

Established by royal decree in 2003⁴⁹, the Saudi National Dialogue series is a forum for specific members of society to gather and discuss contemporary national issues. At the end of the forum the participants submit a series of policy recommendations to the King. The government explains that the series “seeks to...facilitate dialogue among various sections of the society with the aim of promoting public interest and consolidating national unity based on the Islamic faith.” The Saudi government further claims to encourage “the largest possible number of people to take part in the dialogue” in order to “strengthen the role of civil societies with the aim of ensuring justice, equality and freedom of expression within the framework of the Shari’a law,” and to develop a strategy to ensure the application of the results obtained in the process.⁵⁰ In practice however, the dialogues have not reflected these premises.

In reality, the dialogues have been used by the government as a tool to strengthen regime control through the monopolization of the political debate. In this way the government is able to control the key features of the national debate: the participants, the content, the pace, and the media, while concurrently delegitimizing dissent from non-participant actors.⁵¹ Government manipulation of the national dialogues in regard to the women’s rights movement is visible in the Third National Dialogue held in 2004.

The Third National Dialogue sought to address the issue of women; it focused on women’s rights and duties, women and work, women and education and women and society, and lasted for only 3 days. The 70 participants were selected by the government and half were females who had achieved a prominent position in a particular professional field. Many of the liberal participants expressed that the

event appeared state-managed. Foremost, conservatives from the religious establishment were over-represented.⁵² Second, the participants were not offered any real prerogatives⁵³ and all recommendations were subject to the ultimate disposition of the King.⁵⁴ Third, the debates were not public and only specific media outlets had access to them.⁵⁵ Fourth, many sensitive issues were avoided, such as women's legal status or their right to drive.⁵⁶ As a result many participants were dissatisfied with the dialogue and some even tried to walk out. Furthermore, as all of the discussions were led by men⁵⁷, the dialogues had the additional affect of institutionalizing a silent and symbolic, rather than substantive, role for women within the dialogues themselves, thus reinforcing the inferior status of women.⁵⁸ One male participant expressed that little input actually derived from "society itself," and that ultimately, "the event was to a considerable degree held for external and media consumption."⁵⁹ The view of this participant is not unique; Saudi scholar Madawi al-Rasheed similarly described the dialogues as a "public relations exercise envisaged to absorb public frustration and anger."⁶⁰

Despite these startling realities the US response to the Third National Dialogue was overwhelmingly positive. US government officials failed to address the considerable failures evident within the Third National Dialogue and instead extended excessive commendations to the Saudi government for the event and the series overall. This response is evident in the public statements of first, US Secretary of State Rice and Second, US Secretary of State Clinton.

In 2004 during a joint press conference with Prince Saud, Condoleezza Rice recognized the Saudi National Dialogue as an important and progressive event for the Kingdom.⁶¹ Clinton then reaffirmed the approving US stance in 2009, during her salute to King Abdullah. During her speech, Clinton praised the king "for his leadership on key regional...challenges, leadership in developing and strengthening the Kingdom's institutions," and for establishing the Nation Dialogues series, which she described as a "powerful," bold step in promoting "moderation, tolerance, and mutual respect."⁶²

The Saudi Government is overtly encouraged by US praise for the Dialogues. In 2009 the Saudi Embassy in Washington DC published an article under "Recent News," entitled "U.S. official praises Saudi National Dialogue Initiative". The article publicizes U.S. Charge d'Affaires to Saudi Arabia

Richard Erdman’s acclamation of Saudi activities, in which Erdman “praised the efforts of the King Abdulaziz Center [for National Dialogue] and stressed the benefits of learning from the Saudi experience.” The Embassy delights that Erdman further praised the Saudi Government’s “successful domestic dialogue initiative,” as not just a national triumph but also as internationally transcendent.⁶³ These examples illustrate how the US has been encouraging ineffectual reform and helping to institutionalize female suppression in Saudi Arabia through its consistent policy of appeasement.

Looking Forward

Through the female sphere of activities - developed from sex segregation reform – women in Saudi Arabia have been able to mobilize the women’s movement and significantly develop their ability to self-advocate. Whereas in the past moderate male actors were largely responsible for the development of the women’s movement in Saudi Arabia, women have now assumed a larger proportion of this responsibility by acquiring new leadership roles in various sectors of the state. Saudi women, bolstered by effective international support, are becoming increasingly capable of encouraging an official reexamination of the sacred text, which could finally allow them personal autonomy.

¹ Jan Michiel Otto, *Sharia Incorporated: A comparative Overview of the Legal Systems of Twelve Muslim Countries in Past and Present* (Leiden University Press, 2010), 157.

² A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Maryland: Amana Corp., 1983), 190.

³ Human Rights Watch, *Perpetual Minors: Human Rights Abuses Stemming from Male Guardianship and Sex Segregation in Saudi Arabia* (New York City: Human Rights Watch, 2008), 10.

⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Perpetual Minors*, 2.

⁵ Ibid, 4.

⁶ Ibid, 22.

⁷ A Safe World For Women, Domestic Violence in Saudi Arabia: On the Increase, <http://www.asafeworldforwomen.org/domestic-violence/saudi-arabia/404-domestic-violence-in-saudi-arabia-on-the-increase.html>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ http://www.upr-info.org/IMG/pdf/A_HRC_WG6_4_L9_SaudiArabia.pdf

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Looser Rein, Uncertain Gain*.

¹¹ Human Rights Watch, *Perpetual Minors*, 3.

¹² Le Renard, *Only for Women*, 610.

¹³ Ibid. 622.

¹⁴ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Economy and Planning, *The Eighth Development Plan: (1425/1426 - 1429/1430)A.H (2005 -2009)A.D*, 2009, p. 325

¹⁵ Le Renard, *Only for Women*, 610.

¹⁶ Ibid, 626.

¹⁷ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Economy and Planning, *The Eighth Development Plan*, p. 336

¹⁸ Le Renard, *Only for Women*, 625.

¹⁹ Ibid, 626.

²⁰ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Economy and Planning, *The Eighth Development Plan*, p. 337

²¹ Victoria, Robson, Business behind the veil, *Middle East Economic Digest*, Vol. 49, Issue 25 (2005).

²² Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Economy and Planning, *The Eighth Development Plan*, p. 333

²³ Nimah Ismail Nawwab, Arab News, Saudi Women's Role in Building Bridges, <http://www.anvk.org/events/20030000/SDCGArabNewsArticle.pdf>.

²⁴ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Economy and Planning, *The Eighth Development Plan*, p. 339

²⁵ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Economy and Planning, *The Ninth Development Plan*.

²⁶ Noura Alturki, Rebekah Braswell, *Businesswomen in Saudi Arabia: Characteristics, Challenges, and Aspirations in a Regional Context*, (Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2010) Foreword.

²⁷ Rita Henley Jensen, Women's eNews, Saudi Women Push Dialogue on Rights, <http://www.womensenews.org/story/commentary/050308/saudi-women-push-dialogue-rights>.

²⁸ Noura Alturki, Rebekah Braswell, *Businesswomen in Saudi Arabia*, p. 23

-
- ²⁹ Ibid, p. 20
- ³⁰ Le Renard, *Only for Women*, 612.
- ³¹ Ibid, 624
- ³² Ibid, 623
- ³³ Ibid, 622
- ³⁴ Ibid, 623
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Alain Gresh, Le Monde Diplomatique, Between Tradition and Demands for Change, <http://mondediplo.com/2006/02/02saudi>.
- ³⁷ A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Maryland: Amana Corp., 1983), 190.
- ³⁸ Jan Michiel Otto, *Sharia Incorporated*, 165.
- ³⁹ Hertog, *Building the Body Politic*, par. 69.
- ⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Looser Rein, Uncertain Gain*.
- ⁴¹ Middle East Digest – June 20, 2011, U.S. Department of State, last modified June 20, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/mideastdigest/mayaug/166553.htm>.
- ⁴² Clinton tries 'quiet diplomacy' on Saudi female drivers' protest, CNN Politics, last modified June 20, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/06/20/clinton.saudi.female.drivers/>.
- ⁴³ US Department of State, Remarks by Secretary Clinton: March 2011, 2011 International Women of Courage Awards Ceremony, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/03/157895.htm>
- ⁴⁴ The Middle East Partnership Initiative, Women in Politics, <http://mepi.state.gov/mepi/english-mepi/what-we-do/supporting-women/women-in-politics/>.
- ⁴⁵ Division for the Advancement for Women, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Declarations, Reservations and Objections to CEDAW, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm>
- ⁴⁶ Remarks with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal, U.S. Department of State, last modified November 4, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/11/216236.htm>.
- ⁴⁷ Middle East Digest – June 20, 2011, U.S. Department of State.
- ⁴⁸ Remarks with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal, U.S. Department of State.
- ⁴⁹ Jan Michiel Otto, *Sharia Incorporated*, 154.
- ⁵⁰ King Abdulaziz Center For National Dialogue, Center's Objectives, http://www.kacnd.org/eng/center_goals.asp.
- ⁵¹ Steffen Hertog, "Building the Body Politic: Emerging Corporatism in Saudi Arabia," *Chroniques Yéménites*, No. 12 (2004): par. 24 <http://cy.revues.org/187?&id=187>.
- ⁵² Hertog, *Building the Body Politic*, par. 29.
- ⁵³ Amélie Le Renard, "Only for Women: Women, the State, and Reform in Saudi Arabia," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (2008), p. 619.
- ⁵⁴ Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, About Saudi Arabia: The Basic Law of Governance, http://www.saudiembassy.net/about/country-information/laws/The_Basic_Law_Of_Governance.aspx
- ⁵⁵ Le Renard, *Only for Women*, 618.
- ⁵⁶ Hertog, *Building the Body Politic*, par. 29.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Le Renard, *Only for Women*, 619.

⁵⁹ Hertog, *Building the Body Politic*, par. 29.

⁶⁰ Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15.

⁶¹ Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2005 Transcript, Joint press conference of Prince Saud and Secretary Rice in Riyadh, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2005/transcript/Page13.aspx>

⁶² US Department of State, Remarks by Secretary Clinton: September 2009, Saudi National Day, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/09/129536.htm>.

⁶³ Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Public Affairs, U.S. official praises Saudi national dialogue initiative, http://www.saudiembassy.net/latest_news/news07300901.aspx.

Bibliography

- A Safe World For Women. Domestic Violence in Saudi Arabia: On the Increase.
<http://www.asafeworldforwomen.org/domestic-violence/saudi-arabia/404-domestic-violence-in-saudi-arabia-on-the-increase.html>.
- Al-Rasheed, Madawi. *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Alatout, Samer “Walls as Technologies of government: the double construction of geographies of peace and conflict in Israel politics: 2002-Present, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 99 [5] (2009): 956-967.
- Ali, A. Yusuf. *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*. Maryland: Amana Corp., 1983.
- Alturki, Noura, and Rebekah Braswell, *Businesswomen in Saudi Arabia: Characteristics, Challenges, and Aspirations in a Regional Context*. Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2010: 1-65.
- Amnesty International. Saudi Arabia: Amnesty International Report 2010.
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/saudi-arabia/report-2010>.
- Davies, Catriona. CNN, Inside the Middle East, Saudi Women Revolution makes a stand for equal rights.
<http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/05/04/saudi.women.revolution.rights/>.
- Division for the Advancement for Women. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Declarations, Reservations and Objections to CEDAW.
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm>
- Gresh, Alain. Le Monde Diplomatique, Between Tradition and Demands for Change.
<http://mondediplo.com/2006/02/02saudi>.
- Hertog, Steffen. “Building the Body Politic: Emerging Corporatism in Saudi Arabia.” *Chroniques Yéménites*, No. 12 (2004). <http://cy.revues.org/187?&id=187>.
- Human Rights Watch. *Looser Rein, Uncertain Gain: A Human Rights Assessment of Five Years of King Abdullah's Reforms in Saudi Arabia*. New York City: Human Rights Watch, 2010.
- Human Rights Watch. *Perpetual Minors: Human Rights Abuses Stemming from Male Guardianship and Sex Segregation in Saudi Arabia*. New York City: Human Rights Watch, 2008.
- The Institute for Gulf Affairs. No Women No Play. <http://www.NoWomenNoPlay.com>.
- Jensen, Rita Henley. Women's eNews, Saudi Women Push Dialogue on Rights.
<http://www.womensenews.org/story/commentary/050308/saudi-women-push-dialogue-rights>.
- King Abdulaziz Center For National Dialogue. Center's Objectives.
http://www.kacnd.org/eng/center_goals.asp.
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Economy and Planning. *The Eighth Development Plan: (1425/1426 - 1429/1430)A.H (2005 -2009)A.D..* 2009.

Le Renard, Amélie. "Only for Women: Women, the State, and Reform in Saudi Arabia." *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (2008): 610-629.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative. Women in Politics. <http://mepi.state.gov/mepi/english-mepi/what-we-do/supporting-women/women-in-politics/>.

Massoud, Omar W. "Socio-environmental impact of Cairo Metro line 2," *Municipal Engineer* 161 Issue ME3 (2008): 175-182.

Nawwab, Nimah Ismail. Arab News, Saudi Women's Role in Building Bridges.
<http://www.anvk.org/events/20030000/SDCGArabNewsArticle.pdf>.

Otto, Jan Michiel. *Sharia Incorporated: A comparative Overview of the Legal Systems of Twelve Muslim Countries in Past and Present*. Leiden University Press, 2010.

Robson, Victoria. "Business behind the veil." *Middle East Economic Digest*, Vol. 49, Issue 25 (2005).

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia. 2005 Transcript, Joint press conference of Prince Saud and Secretary Rice in Riyadh. <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2005/transcript/Page13.aspx>

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia. About Saudi Arabia: The Basic Law of Governance.
http://www.saudiembassy.net/about/country-information/laws/The_Basic_Law_Of_Governance.aspx

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia. Public Affairs, U.S. official praises Saudi national dialogue initiative.
http://www.saudiembassy.net/latest_news/news07300901.aspx.

Salah El-Dien Ouf, Ahmed M. "Lower and Higher Urban Quality Cycles in Urban

Heritage Areas: Rejuvenation vs. Conservation." *Journal of Urban Design*, Vol. 13. No. 3 (2008): 403-414.

US Department of State. Remarks by Secretary Clinton: March 2011, 2011 International Women of Courage Awards Ceremony. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/03/157895.htm>

US Department of State. Remarks by Secretary Clinton: September 2009. Saudi National Day.
<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/09/129536.htm>.