

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 27, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write to express our grave concern over the imprisonment of civil society and women's rights activists in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and call for their immediate release. We are particularly dismayed by the jailing of Samar Badawi, a recipient of the International Women of Courage Award by the US Department of State in 2012. We strongly echo the calls by the government of Canada, as well as many human rights organizations including Amnesty international and Human Rights Watch, for the unconditional release of Ms. Badawi and all those imprisoned for demanding their fundamental human rights. We are dismayed at the economic and diplomatic retaliation leveled by Saudi Arabia at Canada for expressing these concerns and urge the Administration to come to the defense of our NATO ally.

As you may know, Ms. Badawi has a long record of heroic advocacy for women's rights, which she pursues at great personal risk. She is a leading advocate for women's suffrage in the country and filed an unprecedented lawsuit in 2011 to challenge the legal basis for denying her right to register to vote. She was a leader in the campaign to grant women the right to drive by legally contesting the basis for the rejection of her license application. In 2014, the Saudi regime barred her from traveling internationally. Late last month, she was arrested and imprisoned as part of a broad crackdown on human rights advocates. Ms. Badawi's imprisonment does not come in a vacuum -- she is just one of hundreds who have been jailed by the Saudi regime for exercising their rights to free speech, calling for a democratic reform, and defending other basic human rights.

While we appreciate the State Department position that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia should "address and respect due process and also publicize information on some of its legal cases," a mild statement is insufficient to address this serious issue. We are troubled by the State Department's refusal to condemn the arrest of Ms. Badawi during the August 7 press briefing. We urge you to uphold our nation's fundamental values and stand with Canada to deploy all diplomatic tools at your disposal to secure the release of Ms. Badawi and all imprisoned human rights advocates.

As Ranking Member Robert Menendez of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concluded, "Human rights are not just a nice gesture, they're absolutely crucial to peace, justice, and the spread of democracy, and therefore stability around the world." Congress exercises oversight over U.S. security assistance to Saudi Arabia and we echo Senator Menendez's concern that "the American public has a right to insist that the sales of U.S. weapons to foreign governments...are consistent with U.S. values and national security objectives."

We thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



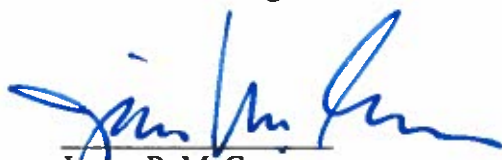
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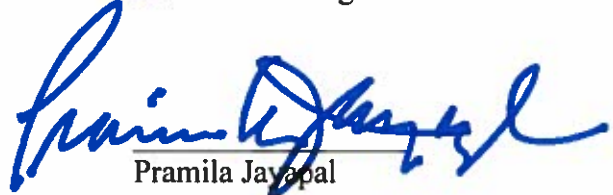
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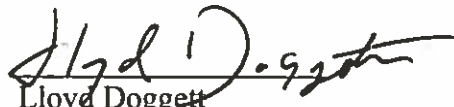
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