

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 28, 2016

His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
Crown Prince and Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
P.O. Box 2933
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
11134

Your Royal Highness:

We write to express our concern regarding the Government of Saudi Arabia's continued treatment of human rights advocates, particularly the documented prosecutions of non-violent activists who are engaging in freedom of expression. Intolerance for freedom of speech and the imposition of travel bans and lengthy prison terms for peaceful dissidents harm Saudi Arabia's reputation in the international community and stifle Saudi innovation and creativity.

Specifically, we are concerned and disappointed in the January 12, 2016 arrest and interrogation of human rights defender Samar Badawi for her posts on social media. Ms. Badawi has also been under a travel ban since December 2014. Staff members of our offices recently met with Ms. Badawi during a delegation visit to Riyadh.

The travel ban on Ms. Badawi, the continued detentions of her brother, Raif Badawi, and husband, human rights attorney Waleed Abu al-Khair, and the treatment of other human rights advocates including members of the Saudi Association for Political Rights (ACPRA), overshadow the positive steps that Saudi Arabia has taken to strengthen citizen participation in public life, including permitting women to vote and run in the municipal elections and formally promulgating a law to govern civil society organizations. As members of the U.S. Senate who greatly value our strong partnership with Saudi Arabia, we want these positive developments to receive recognition. We fear that they will be overshadowed, however, as long as the government arbitrarily limits the activities of human rights defenders and detains them.

We urge you to revoke the ban on Ms. Badawi's travel and ensure that she is not harassed further for her work. We also request that you release Mr. Badawi, Mr. Abu al-Khair, and work to increase tolerance for other non-violent activists.

We look forward to working with you to continue the strong friendship between our two nations and the protection and promotion of human rights for the people of Saudi Arabia. This commitment, in turn, will reinforce your government's positive standing within the international community.



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator

Sincerely,



Bob Corker
U.S. Senator