



**“It Is Our Right”**



**Americans for Democracy  
& Human Rights in Bahrain**

*Saudi Women Speak on the Positives,  
Pitfalls of Municipal Elections*

On 25 September 2011, the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud announced that women would be permitted to both vote and stand for office in Saudi Arabia's third cycle of municipal elections.<sup>1</sup> His decision marked a significant evolution in the official government position on women's rights. In 2009, for example, when confronted with the question of female voting, then-Interior Minister and Crown Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz reportedly stated that he "saw no need for women to vote or participate in politics."<sup>2</sup> Yet on 12 December 2015, over 100,000 women voted in local elections,<sup>3</sup> and 21 women won municipal council seats.<sup>4</sup>

Although municipal councils play a role in local governance, they operate under significant constraints; in practice, the councils exercise limited authority over local affairs and have virtually no influence on national politics.<sup>5</sup> Despite these limitations, many Saudi women have expressed enthusiasm for the elections, viewing them as fundamentally shifting their relationship with the government.<sup>6</sup> Others have expressed ambivalence at the extent to which these elections will bolster their participation in public life.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the April removal of Norah al-Faiz from her position as deputy minister of education,<sup>8</sup> the highest ranking women in Saudi governance, the two-month arbitrary detention of women's driving activists Loujain al-Hathloul and Maysaa al-Amoudi,<sup>9</sup> and the government's severe and ongoing repression of peaceful, female human rights activists and political reformers<sup>10</sup> have cast doubt on the extent to which authorities are willing to enact needed, substantive reforms to improve women's rights in Saudi Arabia.

ADHRB's study of the December 2015 elections and their impact on women's rights in Saudi Arabia opens with brief background on the development of voting in Saudi Arabia. It then briefly details restrictions placed on women voters and candidates in the run-up to the polls before highlighting the responses of four Saudi women who gave expansive and wide-ranging responses to the questions of ADHRB interviewers. The study ends with a short discussion of the election results and an appendix that provides further information on prior municipal elections in Saudi Arabia.

## **Background on the Councils**

In response to building internal pressures for greater participatory governance,<sup>11</sup> the Government of Saudi Arabia drafted a municipal election law in 2004 that set up 178 municipal councils and organized a first round of elections for 2005.<sup>12</sup> Originally, councils ranged in size from as many as 14 seats in urban centers to as few as 4 in rural communities,<sup>13</sup> with half of members elected and the other half appointed

by the Ministry for Municipal and Rural Affairs (MOMRA).<sup>14</sup> For elections in 2005 and 2011, the government restricted the voting to men age 21 or older.<sup>15</sup> For the 2015 elections, however, the government not only extended to women the right to vote but also introduced several liberalizing reforms, including reducing the voting age to 18 and expanding the proportion of elected council members.<sup>16</sup> The now-284 municipal councils have up to as many as 30 seats, depending on the district, two-thirds of which are elected, while the remainder are appointed by MOMRA.<sup>17</sup>

Despite such reforms geared toward achieving greater gender equality, expanding the voter base, and increasing turnout, municipal councilors continue to wield only limited powers. According to the language of the current law, municipal councils manage budget-approved projects; maintenance, development, and investment initiatives; and existing municipal services.<sup>18</sup> They can also approve budgets for municipal projects,<sup>19</sup> although the MOMRA, which executes municipal projects, maintains broad veto powers. Beyond that, the decree encourages the councilors to “study” and give their opinion on the range of municipal services, municipal fees and licenses, and land usage policies, in addition to exercising oversight through regular reporting.<sup>20</sup>

## **The Lead-Up to December 2015**

Allowing women to vote, increasing the number of elected council seats, and lowering the voting age created positive momentum in the lead-up to the December polls. More than 5,900 men and 970 women registered as candidates<sup>21</sup> to contest 2,106 open seats across 284 councils.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, 1.35 million men registered to vote, while 131,000 women registered.<sup>23</sup>

Late introduction of restrictions on voters and candidates, particularly ones that disproportionately affected women, tempered some of this enthusiasm, however. In early August 2015, the MOMRA halted voter- and candidate-education workshops run by the Baladi Initiative,<sup>24</sup> a civil society organization founded in 2011 to increase women’s participation in electoral processes.<sup>25</sup> The ministry failed to clearly state its reasoning for the workshops’ shutdown.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, MOMRA officials banned women from campaigning directly to men, encouraging them to instead appoint or hire a male spokesperson to reach male audiences,<sup>27</sup> or providing them limited opportunity to speak indirectly to men via P.A. systems.<sup>28</sup> Saudi women also reported irregularities and difficulties in registering as voters and candidates that created obstacles to their full and unimpeded participation in local elections, including a brief, three-

week window of opportunity in which to register; a bureaucracy unable to provide for women lacking identifying documentation; the ongoing strictures of the male guardianship system; and restrictions on women's freedom of movement, including a continuing ban on driving, that prevents many women from traveling to register and vote.<sup>29</sup> Partly due to these restrictions, voter registration among women remained low.<sup>30</sup> Women comprised only 22 percent of first-time registered voters and formed only 6% of the total electorate.<sup>31</sup>

Significantly, days before the election a series of arbitrary decisions by election officials banned several women candidates from participation. In late November 2015, the government suspended Nassima al-Sadah, Loujain al-Hathloul, and Tamador al-Yami from running as candidates.<sup>32</sup> All three women had a history of political activism; all three had participated in women's driving campaigns,<sup>33</sup> and al-Hathloul had previously faced arrest for her activism.<sup>34</sup> Al-Hathloul won her process of appeal and was reinstated on 9 December.<sup>35</sup> The government rejected al-Sadah's appeal.<sup>36</sup> Al-Yami appealed, although she did not comment publicly on its outcome.<sup>37</sup>

## **Saudi Women Speak**

In the month before the 12 December election, ADHRB conducted separate, lengthy interviews with four Saudi women who are presented here under the pseudonyms Zeina, Aisha, Norah, and Rana. The women represent different generations of Saudi society, and each hails from a different community. One ran as a candidate for office. All are politically active, although some would embrace, and others decline, the descriptor of "activist". The women provided pessimistic and frequently blunt assessments of the elections and women's role in them, even as the majority affirmed the importance of women's participation. Below, ADHRB has excerpted the interviews' most relevant portions, while also juxtaposing answers that both acknowledge commonalities and highlight differences between the women's varying opinions. ADHRB edited and condensed responses for clarity and space where appropriate.

### ***On the current state of women's rights under King Salman***

ADHRB asked all four women their impressions of the state of women's rights since the passing of King Abdullah, and whether or not the situation had improved or devolved since King Salman assumed power in January 2015. **Zeina, Aisha, and Norah** all definitively stated that the situation has gotten worse.

**Zeina** and **Aisha** largely attributed this deterioration to a lack of progress on women's rights since King Abdullah's death, with **Zeina** relating:

*If it [progress] has stopped, that means that it's getting worse. We need to go forward if we want to improve human and women's rights.*

**Norah** pointed to the arrest and arbitrary detention of women's rights activists Loujain al-Hathloul and Maysaa al-Amoudi in late 2014 through early 2015 as evidence of the worsening climate for women.

**Rana** did not supply a wholly positive or negative answer, instead stating that while major reforms, such as the abolition of the guardianship system, had not materialized, some smaller reforms had been encouraging:

*However, there have been some administrative reforms, such as the possibility of obtaining legal agency without identification from a man (by way of the fingerprint system)<sup>1</sup> and, likewise, the enactment of a law that allows a woman to obtain an identity card regardless of agreement from her guardian.*

#### ***On the effectiveness of the councils***

At various points in their respective interviews, three of the four women expressed frustration with the municipal councils' lack of power. **Aisha** stated:

*[The municipal councils do] nothing, really. They write it in papers, it's that the members of the [council] just give their opinion. But it's not like a legislative body.*

When asked if she knew of any successful projects led by her local municipal council, **Aisha** continued:

*I don't think so, no. Because, you know, the people don't believe in it...they know it doesn't affect their life. Even someone from my family, I ask him about it, I want to know: what are people's opinions? He said, 'it's like a play, the government do it so that they say we are a democratic people.'"*

**Norah** also provided a negative assessment, relating a poor experience she and several other women petitioners had with their local council:

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<sup>1</sup> Before November 2015, women could only establish their identity in a court of law if a man could testify to it; currently, the Saudi Ministry of Justice is implementing a system of fingerprint authentication to avoid this: <http://www.biometricupdate.com/tag/saudi-arabia>.

*They have no power. Exactly what they have been ordered from the government, they will talk about...in the past few years, we sent a women's campaign for—to talk about women's right for driving, and basically I think it's still in the closet. One of the folders, they didn't open it yet.*

Later on in the interview, **Norah** expanded on this story, stating that when she and a group of women delivered the council a petition concerning women's right to drive, the councilors referenced publicly-circulated articles concerning driving's negative impact on women and then dropped the subject.

**Rana** responded:

*Previous municipal councils were ineffective. This was reflected in the number of registered voters, which fell significantly and gives a clear picture of how people view the councils' effectiveness.*

**Zeina** went into more detail than the other respondents, beginning with a simple description of the councils' powers:

*They try to fund a new project to improve society, like a street and maintenance, the lights. But it has nothing to do with rules, procedures, policies—it's not like a local government which the West has...They're just a group of men, now women and men, who discuss the issues of the region that they cover, and they suggest some change or some reform in this area. And the municipal government employee can reject it. So the power is more in the government's hands, not in the members'.*

**Zeina** then elaborated on the friction that exists between the municipal councils and the local executive governments, run by the MOMRA, with which they interact:

*They [local officials who implement council decisions] have delayed a lot. And the municipal council hasn't, or doesn't have power to, for example, apply a fine or punish the employee who doesn't apply the [council's] order or do the project...They just make a report about the project, which they do, and take this report to the ministry. If the ministry doesn't do anything, that means that nothing happens in the real field. Because of that, we have a project delayed for six, seven years.*

**Zeina** went on to state that the project in question, highway improvements, had recently been opened in her community. Her municipal council first proposed the project following its initial establishment in 2005.

***On low voter registration among women***

All four interviewees commented on the low rate of voter registration among women in 2015. All pointed to a variety of barriers, mostly related to government policy, which depressed women's registration and general participation. **Aisha, Rana, and Zeina** highlighted the government's hindering of public awareness and education campaigns about the elections, among women in particular, as contributing to low voter registration. **Zeina** pointed to the Baladi Initiative's closure as symptomatic and went on to state:

*There is no training to raise awareness about the woman's—how the women's participation should be. And nothing to raise awareness among women in the society. The ministry should make a training or campaign to encourage people to get on this election, but it's not happening in Saudi Arabia. The decision to get the women to the election was in 2011. From 2011 until now, 2015, two months before the election, we didn't hear anything about women's elections.*

**Aisha** offered more stringent criticism, stating:

*Even the government doesn't do good marketing for it, because they know it's a lie. So they don't believe it that much. The marketing on the television and in the street, like, it's a little bit, it's not too much, you know. It's not that you can see it everywhere. It's not like that. They didn't even spend money for it.*

**Norah** took a broader approach to identifying the underlying causes of low registration among women, saying:

*There are a lot of barriers between women and their rights to do anything.*

She then underlined a lack of legal documentation among women that allows them to establish their identity, a legal requirement to register to vote. For example, even though women had to offer proof of residency in order to register, many women living under the male guardianship system have difficulties

renting or owning property on their own. They therefore could not produce utility bills, leases, or deeds bearing their names.

### ***On participating***

Interesting differences arose among the interviewees when they discussed their personal participation in the election and their opinion on how Saudi women should approach the election as a whole. All expressed marked dissatisfaction with the current configuration of the elections, the municipal councils, and the restrictions placed on women's involvement. Beyond this common position, one advocated for the active participation of all women, another advocated for women to conduct a society-wide boycott, and two others stated that they supported women's participation in general while declining to vote as individuals.

**Rana** took this last position, stating that, while women would gain important experience and confidence from voting and running as candidates in 2015:

*This time I did not register and will not vote despite my dream to do so democratically.*

**Zeina** strongly endorsed full participation, stating:

*Even when we know that the government is doing them [the elections] just for show, an award for the women, it is our right, and we need to hold it with our teeth and say, "yes, this is our right". And first we take it, we try to improve it, and we ask for more reform. And so it's a first step, and it's very important to take it—to take the chance.*

Later in the interview, **Zeina** further fleshed out this answer:

*I want the society in their thinking, in their conscience...they think that the woman is different than the man, and that the woman cannot do the same job. I want to change this idea in the whole society. So, if everyone sees that the woman stands beside the man and works in the municipal council, that means that there is hope to change the society's thinking.*

In her own interview, **Aisha** delivered responses that strongly differed with the above points:

*No, I'm boycotting. You know, because this group of women [advocating for participation], they are feminists. So, the feminists, with all respect to them, even if they know it's a play, they said, "we want to have a seat in this. We need to force the government to respect us and to have our opinion," even if the result doesn't affect women. What can this election bring to me, as a woman? Nothing! Nothing, at all! So, I told them, "If you boycott that"—we have arguments too much, and some of them are angry with me—I told them, "if we, together, boycott this, and organize a big campaign that says 'hey, government, you are full of, you know, shit'—sorry—'and we don't want to be actors in your play, and you have to do one, two, three, four, and we don't want your election because it doesn't affect me,' that will embarrass the government." Not to go as actor for the government...They have some regret, but they continue, they will continue because their battle is with Salafi men.*

**Norah**, who temporarily lives abroad, expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of political power inherent in voting for the municipal elections. When asked if she would vote in the elections if she were in Saudi Arabia, she at first responded:

*I'm going to do something else. I'm going to go to the streets, not just for voting, but I'm going to go, like, to release all the political prisoners.*

When asked what women should do as a whole, however, she stated:

*No, I support, like, to go and vote. Even if you think—if I were there, I might vote, to just make a point, "we are here." The problem with—they're trying to convince people, "women, she has no right for anything." I agree with just to go because we have been absent for a long time from everything. We need to stand up and, you know, make a change here. To show them that we are in power and that we can do something.*

### ***On the role of the United States***

The US has long balanced a stated commitment to upholding human rights with being a firm ally of the Saudi Arabian government. Additionally, the US has, by the admission of the current administration, deemphasized human rights concerns in favor of other issues within the bilateral relationship with Saudi Arabia.<sup>38</sup> ADHRB pressed its respondents, at the end of their respective interviews, to give their thoughts on what role the US government should play in supporting the push for greater women's rights within Saudi Arabia. The four interviewees responded and offered a variety of answers, but each of them stated their desire to see the US play a more active, vocal role with regards to their collective situation.

**Norah**, for her part, stated:

*What I understand, everybody's running after his interest [is self-interested]. I wish they [the US] could stand for this issue. It's a huge subject, and I don't know how they affect [it], but they should at least mention it. At least say something about it.*

**Rana** replied:

*In my opinion, it is correct that America's need for Saudi Arabia is a powerful factor that prevents the Administration from criticizing or condemning practices that are directly carried out by authorities. However, there is another factor: lack of clear, official policy. Multiple agencies at the head of the government confuse the approach [to women's rights], and there should be reforms or changes to positively and clearly define how the US can positively affect the situation of Saudi women.*

**Aisha** said:

*America, or Britain, or Germany, or Europe, they can do a lot. Always we speak up with people, the ambassador or something, all the time. My opinion is: leave the government alone. We don't need your help, just leave the government for us...if they [the US] didn't help them [the Saudi government]—and you can see it clear. Like, if the government does something wrong—they want to be cutting the head off Nimr al-Nimr or Ali al-Nimr—they [the government] freaked out, and they go travel to America and go give them a hug, or they go to the British. They know they're wrong, and we know that! As activists, we know they're scared. So if America, or the British, or the Western world shut their doors in their faces, they will come to us. They will come to us and try to start a new beginning with us.*

**Zeina** responded:

*We believe that the government doesn't care, that the USA government doesn't care about us as a human being. They just talk about a relationship between them and the [Saudi] government and how it's economically to the, the—to affect the economy of the USA. But on other hand, me, for example, I think NGOs, maybe, that NGOs in the USA can do some pressure and some, some changing. Put pressure on their government first, and then their government puts pressure on our government. Because I don't know why women's rights doesn't move quickly in Saudi Arabia. It is basic things. Basic, basic things. Like driving, it is basic things. Why do they stop us from doing it? And why the government in the USA doesn't do anything to put on pressure?*

## **Election Results**

On 11 December 2015, Saudi women won roughly 1% of available municipal council seats. 81 percent of registered women cast ballots,<sup>39</sup> and total turnout, as announced by the MOMRA, was 47%, or 702,542 voters.<sup>40</sup> Turnout was highest (74%) in the Northern Borders Province, while it was lowest in al-Ahsa (27%). The major urban centers of Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina saw turnout reach 45%, 35%, 31%, and 48% respectively.<sup>41</sup>

The government did not publish a list of elected women, but media reports surfaced the names of individual winners, with reports indicating that 21 women won seats. Salma bint Hizab al-Oteibi was the first woman to be elected and now serves in one of the municipal councils of the larger Mecca Province.<sup>42</sup> At least four women won seats on municipal councils in Riyadh, including Huda al-Jeraisy.<sup>43</sup> Lama al-Sulaiman, the vice president of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce, and Rasha Hafzi, an entrepreneur, won in Jeddah.<sup>44</sup> Hinuwf al-Hazmi won a seat in a municipal council within al-Jawf Province, and Mona al-Emery and Fadhila al-Attawy won seats within Tabuk.<sup>45</sup>

## **Recommendations for U.S. Policy**

The municipal councils and the elections that decide them need internal reform. However, the effect of any reforms to the councils will be truly limited until the Government of Saudi Arabia ceases to treat women as second class citizens. While the U.S. is limited in how it can affect the pace of internal reform in Saudi Arabia, ADHRB offers a series of recommendations that, if implemented, would force the Saudi government to respond to external pressure and provide a boost for women's rights activists working for change from the inside.

### **On the municipal councils and elections:**

- Promulgate a technical cooperation agreement between the U.S. Department of State and the Saudi Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs (MOMRA) that:
  - Trains MOMRA officials in the organization and conduction of voter and candidate training workshops;
  - Assists the MOMRA in developing widespread-advertising and elections awareness-raising materials, including a broadly-publicized Get Out the Vote campaign, six months prior to the next municipal elections cycle;
  - Permits women to campaign directly to male audiences;
  - Enlists the assistance of international NGOs in designing and implementing the programs;
  - Encourages the participation of Saudi civil society in implementation of the programs;

- Publicly recognize and congratulate the 21 women voted to the municipal councils; but continue to consistently call attention to the need for international election monitoring and an elected national legislature;
- Press the Government of Saudi Arabia to cede more control of local affairs to municipal council members, including direct executive authority of all municipal council projects set forth in the annual budget of the municipality; and
- Publicly condemn the Government of Saudi Arabia's late removal of women's activists from the campaign list.

**On women's rights in general:**

- Pass a Sense of Congress calling for an end to the ongoing enforcement of the system of male guardianship in Saudi Arabia;
- Publicly condemn the harassment and detention of women's rights activists at every opportunity;
- Pressure the Ministry of Interior, via public and private engagement, to establish victim services in each municipality and reform the Domestic Violence Law to provide more extensive and immediate enforcement mechanisms to separate women from male guardians and family members that abuse them; and
- Make future renewal of the Technical Cooperation Agreement between the U.S. Department of State and the Saudi Ministry of Interior contingent upon that ministry's improvement in the promotion and protection of human rights, including the release of human rights activists and an end to the enforcement of the edict banning women's driving.

## Appendix: Election History

In 2003, King Fahd announced his decision to begin holding elections for municipal council seats.<sup>46</sup> In 2004, the government promulgated a municipal elections law to govern the first round of elections scheduled for 2005.<sup>47</sup> Each municipality election would take place in one of three phases between November and January.<sup>48</sup> The legislation mandated that elections be decided by a simple plurality of votes in each of the municipality's single-member districts.<sup>49</sup> Political parties remain prohibited in Saudi Arabia, so each candidate ostensibly ran independently of any party or organization.<sup>50</sup> The kingdom did not permit women to stand or vote.

Tepid turnout levels and dysfunctional voting procedures hindered the first election cycle. In Riyadh, for example, only 140,000 of an eligible 400,000 men registered to vote in the 2005 election, and only 65% of that number actually went to the polls.<sup>51</sup> Jeddah saw even lower participation, with just 22% of the city's eligible voters even registering.<sup>52</sup> Observers noted that the kingdom's next two largest cities, Mecca and Medina, experienced comparably poor turnouts as well.<sup>53</sup> Though some specific districts within the greater Riyadh municipality reported turnout upwards of 80%, these districts appeared to represent outlying concentrations of active voters rather than significant exceptions.<sup>54</sup>

Scholars cited overcomplicated balloting practices as a key reason for the low voter turnout rates.<sup>55</sup> Hundreds of candidates vied for limited council seats. Between Riyadh and Jeddah, with a combined 14 total available seats, there were 1,176 candidates.<sup>56</sup> With no parties or listing system to guide voters on each candidate's policy platforms, it is likely that many voters were simply overwhelmed. Combined with a lack of training on the voting process and the low impact of an election that decided only half the members of the local governing body, flawed voting practices may have undermined the efficacy of this original democratic experiment.<sup>57</sup>

The next set of elections saw some reform, but little measurable improvement. Originally scheduled for 2009, the government delayed the second round for nearly two years in order to "expand the electorate" and "study the possibility of allowing women to vote."<sup>58</sup> While the government did increase the number of municipalities from 178 to 285, it did not permit women to participate as either voters or candidates.<sup>59</sup> It did, however, end the confusing cross municipal voting system, limiting voters to one

vote per candidate in their respective district.<sup>60</sup> The government also expanded the number of polling stations from 631 to 855.<sup>61</sup>

When the elections finally took place in 2011, they were met with “very low enthusiasm” and were affected by many of the same problems as the previous election, including low turnout.<sup>62</sup> The government officially claimed that roughly 1.08 million Saudi men registered to vote, but media outlets reported a lower number, inferring that the election commission exaggerated its figures by automatically including people who had only registered for the 2005 cycle.<sup>63</sup> According to media reports, no more than 300,000 men were registered by the time of the elections,<sup>64</sup> and polling records suggest that even fewer actually cast ballots.<sup>65</sup> The director of a polling center in Riyadh, for example, reported that only 80 of the 1,800 registered voters in his district turned out, marking a rate of less than 5 percent.<sup>66</sup> Based on these media reports, the 2011 election cycle saw a stark drop in overall public participation.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Asma Alsharif. “Saudi king gives women right to vote.” (Reuters: 2011). Retrieved from:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/25/us-saudi-king-women-idUSTRE78O10Y20110925>.

<sup>2</sup> Associated Press: Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al Saud named Saudi crown prince.” (The National: 2011). Retrieved from:

<http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/prince-nayef-bin-abdulaziz-al-saud-named-saudi-crown-prince>.

<sup>3</sup> Kate Linticum, “Twenty female candidates win election in Saudi Arabia local balloting,” Los Angeles Times, 13 December 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-saudi-arabia-elections-20151213-story.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmed Al Omran, “21 women won seats in Saudi municipal election, the first to allow women to run and vote—Official,” Twitter, 15 December 2015, <https://twitter.com/ahmed/status/676698257079205888>.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Lacey. *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia*. (Penguin: 2009). Print.

<sup>6</sup> “First Saudi women register to vote,” Al Jazeera, 20 August 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/saudi-women-register-vote-150621081535058.html>.

<sup>7</sup> See “Saudi Women Speak,” below.

<sup>8</sup> Simon Tisdall. “Saudi Arabia shakeup as much about retrenchment as reform.” (The Guardian: 2015). Retrieved from:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/29/saudi-arabia-mohammed-bin-nayef-crown-prince>.

<sup>9</sup> “Saudi women drivers ‘freed from jail’,” BBC News, 13 February 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31449972>.

<sup>10</sup> “UN highlights Saudi Arabia’s appalling record on detention of peaceful activists,” Amnesty International UK, 24 November 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/un-highlights-saudi-arabias-appalling-record-detention-peaceful-activists>.

<sup>11</sup> Andrezej Kapiszewski, “Saudi Arabia: Steps Toward Democratization or Reconfiguration of Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (2006), pg. 463-466.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 469.

<sup>13</sup> Hendrik Jan Kraetzschmar, “The first democratic local elections in Saudi Arabia in 2005: Electoral rules, the mobilization of voters, and the Islamist landslide,” LSE Public Policy Group Working Paper No. 6 (2011), pg. 3.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2004/10/20/7288.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Dickinson, “A Long Road to Women’s Suffrage in Saudi Arabia,” *Foreign Policy*, 4 November 2015,

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/04/why-saudi-arabias-women-have-suffrage-in-name-only/>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *نشرة تعريفية عن اختصاصات وصلاحيات المجالس البلدية*, The General Council for Elections, Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs. Print.

<sup>18</sup> نظام المجالس البلدية Royal Decree م/61، February 2014، Article 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Articles 5 and 6.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Articles 7 and 8.

<sup>21</sup> "Saudi Arabia's women vote in election for first time," BBC News, 12 December 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35075702>.

<sup>22</sup> نشرة تعريفية عن اختصاصات وصلاحيات المجالس البلدية Print. The General Council for Elections, Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs.

<sup>23</sup> "Two disqualified as first Saudi women begin campaign for election," The Guardian, 29 November 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/29/first-saudi-arabia-women-stand-election-begin-campaigning>.

<sup>24</sup> Rachel Kreisman, "'My Country': How Saudi Arabia is Undermining Women's Newfound Right to Vote," 24 August 2015, <http://www.adhrb.org/2015/08/my-country-how-saudi-arabia-is-undermining-womens-newfound-right-to-vote/>.

<sup>25</sup> "Saudi Women Respond to Exclusion from Voting: Baladi Campaign," Jadaliyya, 16 May 2011, [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1600/saudi-women-respond-to-exclusion-from-voting\\_balad](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1600/saudi-women-respond-to-exclusion-from-voting_balad).

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<sup>27</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, "Women voted in Saudi Arabia this week – but they only won 1% of available seats and still face systemic discrimination," Business Insider, 15 December 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/women-voted-in-saudi-arabia-this-week-but-they-only-won-1-of-available-seats-and-still-face-systematic-discrimination-2015-12>.

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