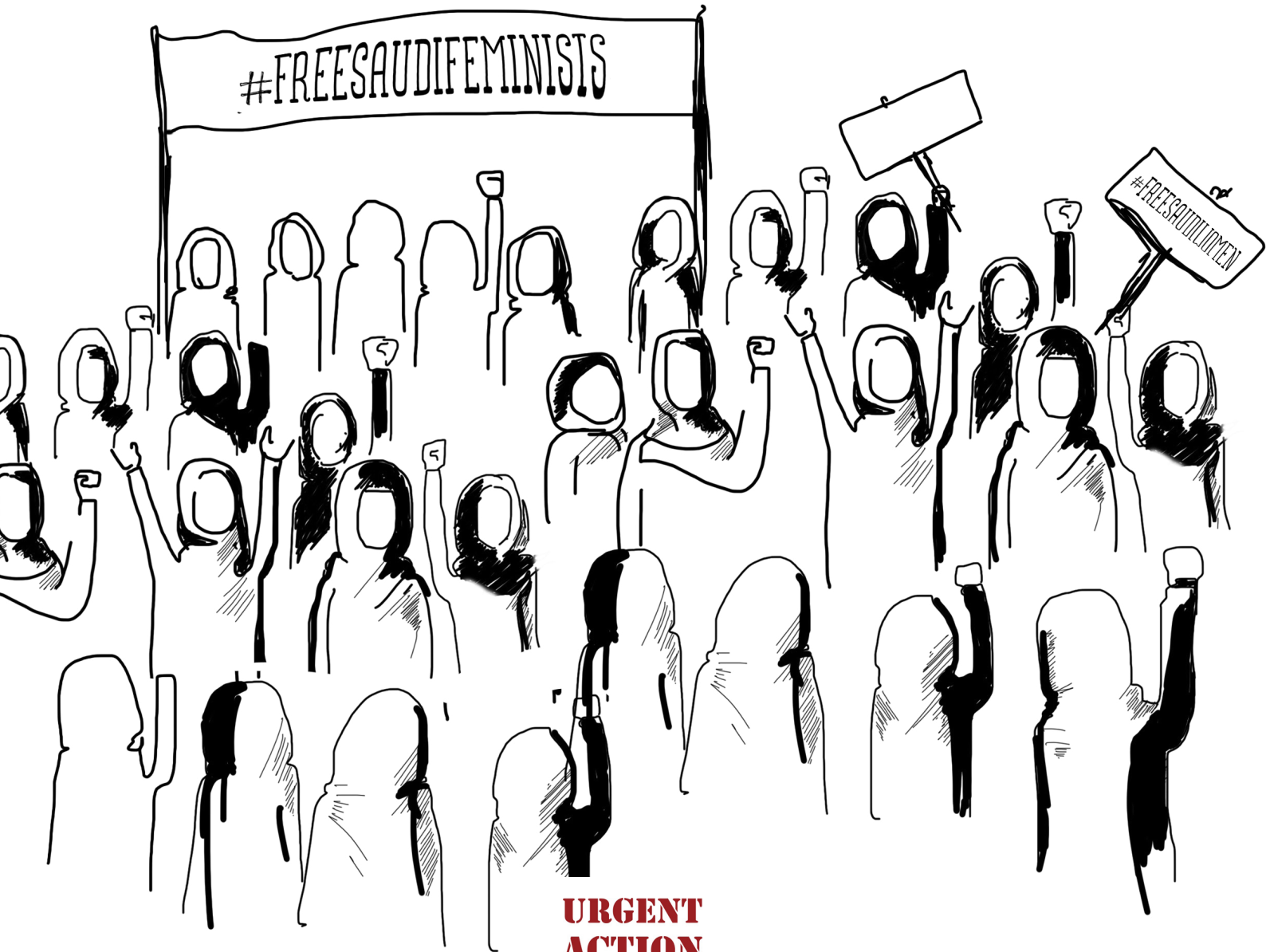


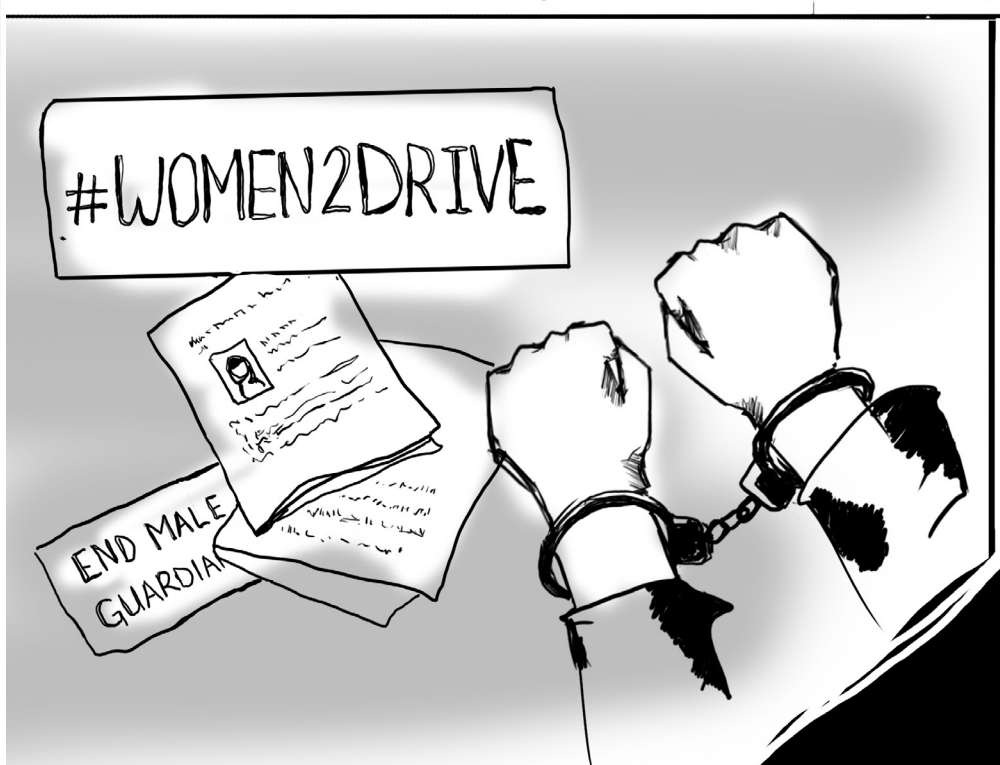
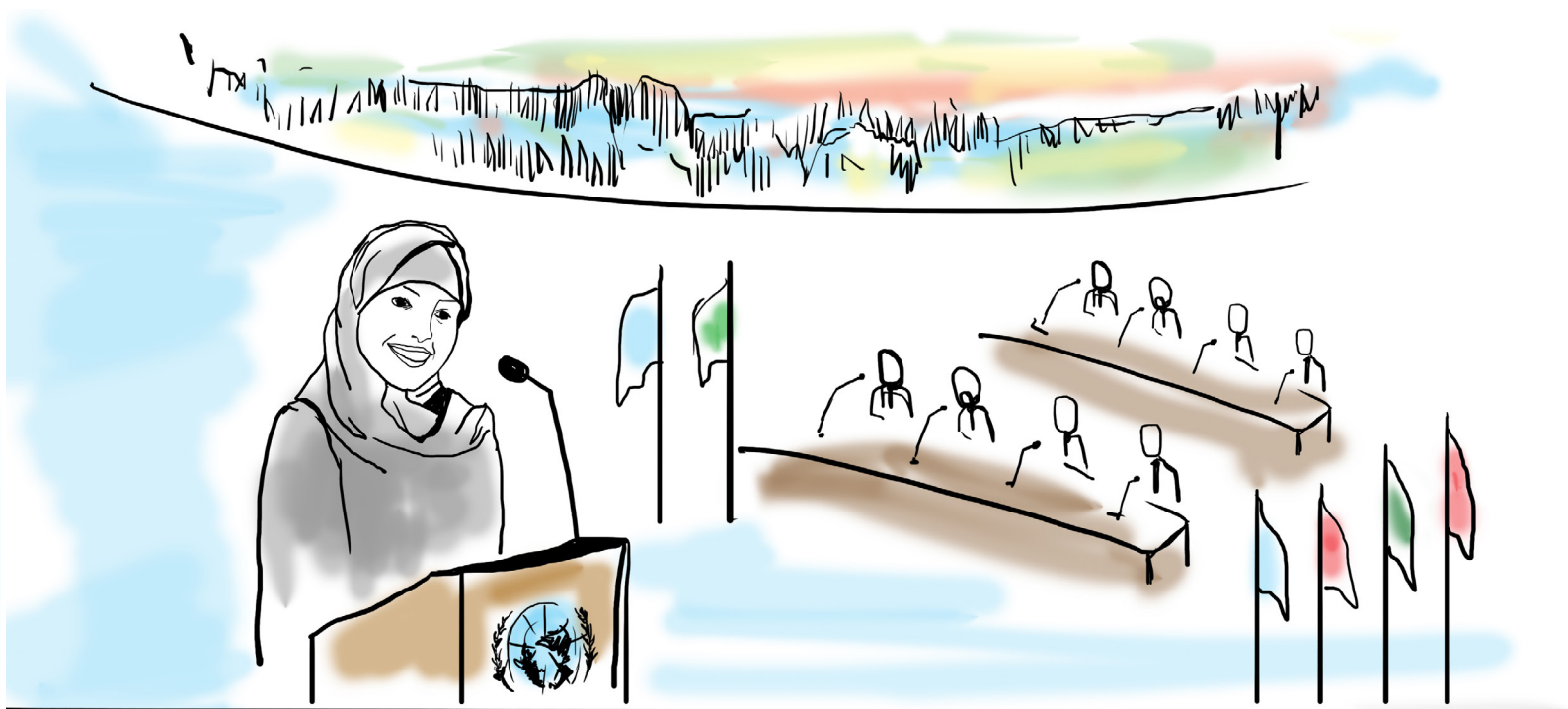
IT IS JUST THE BEGINNING!

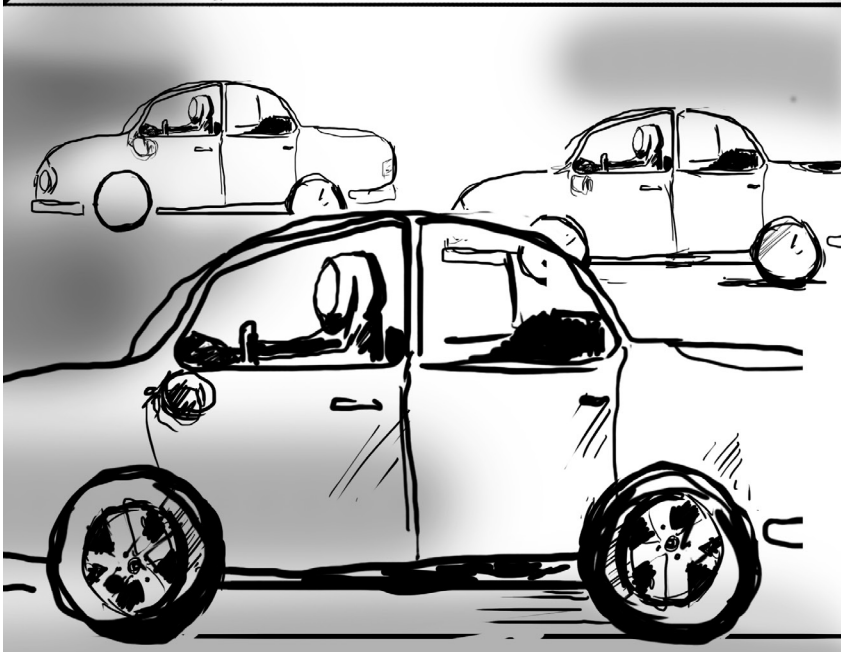
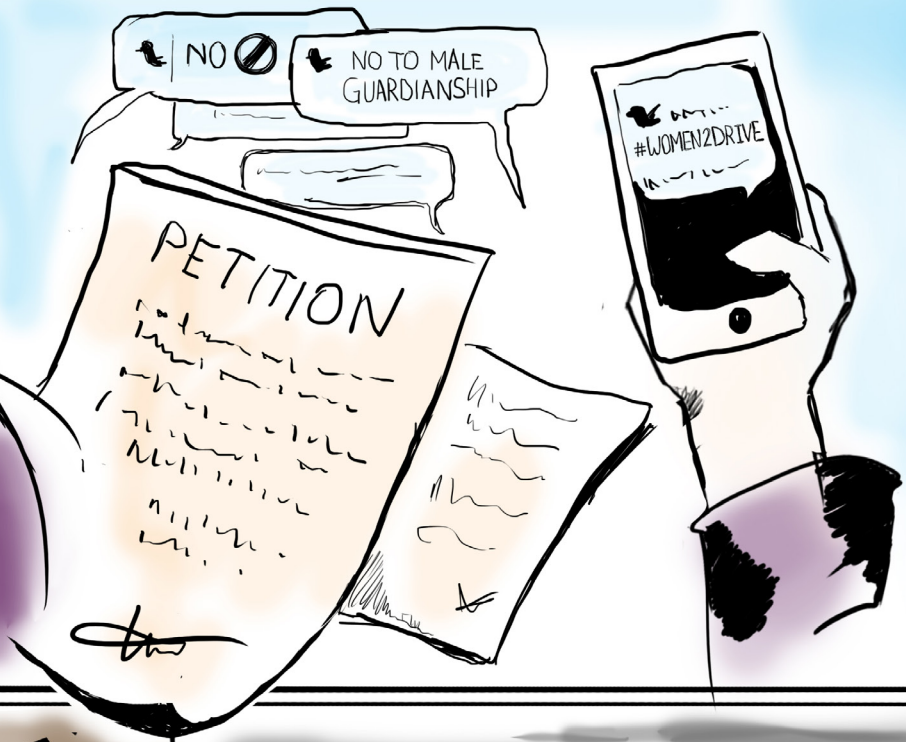


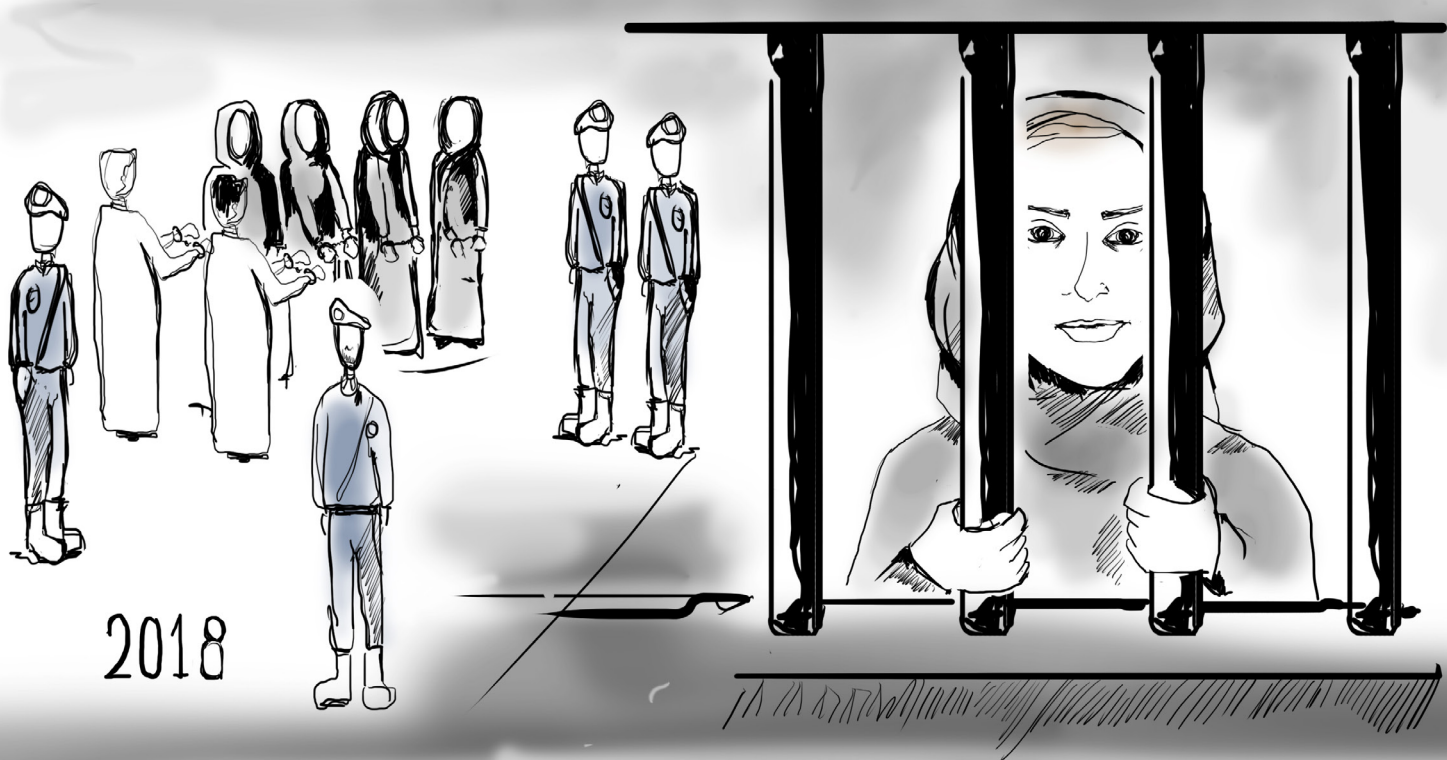
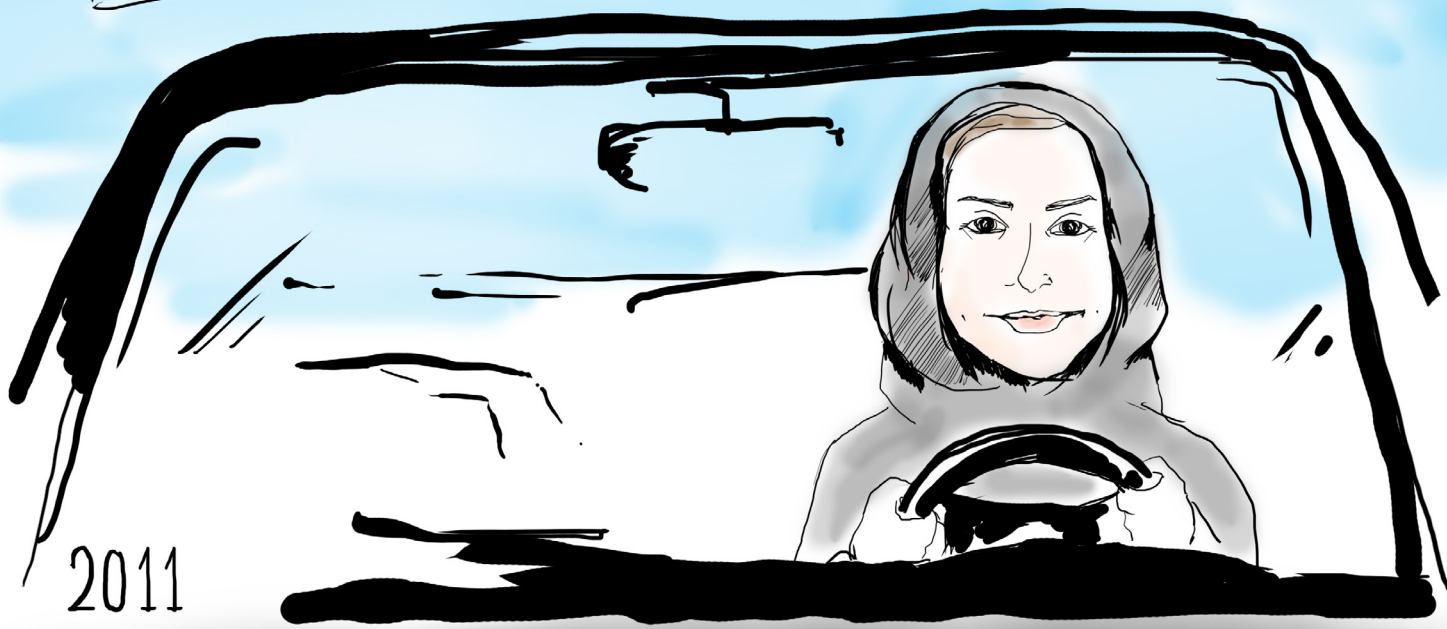
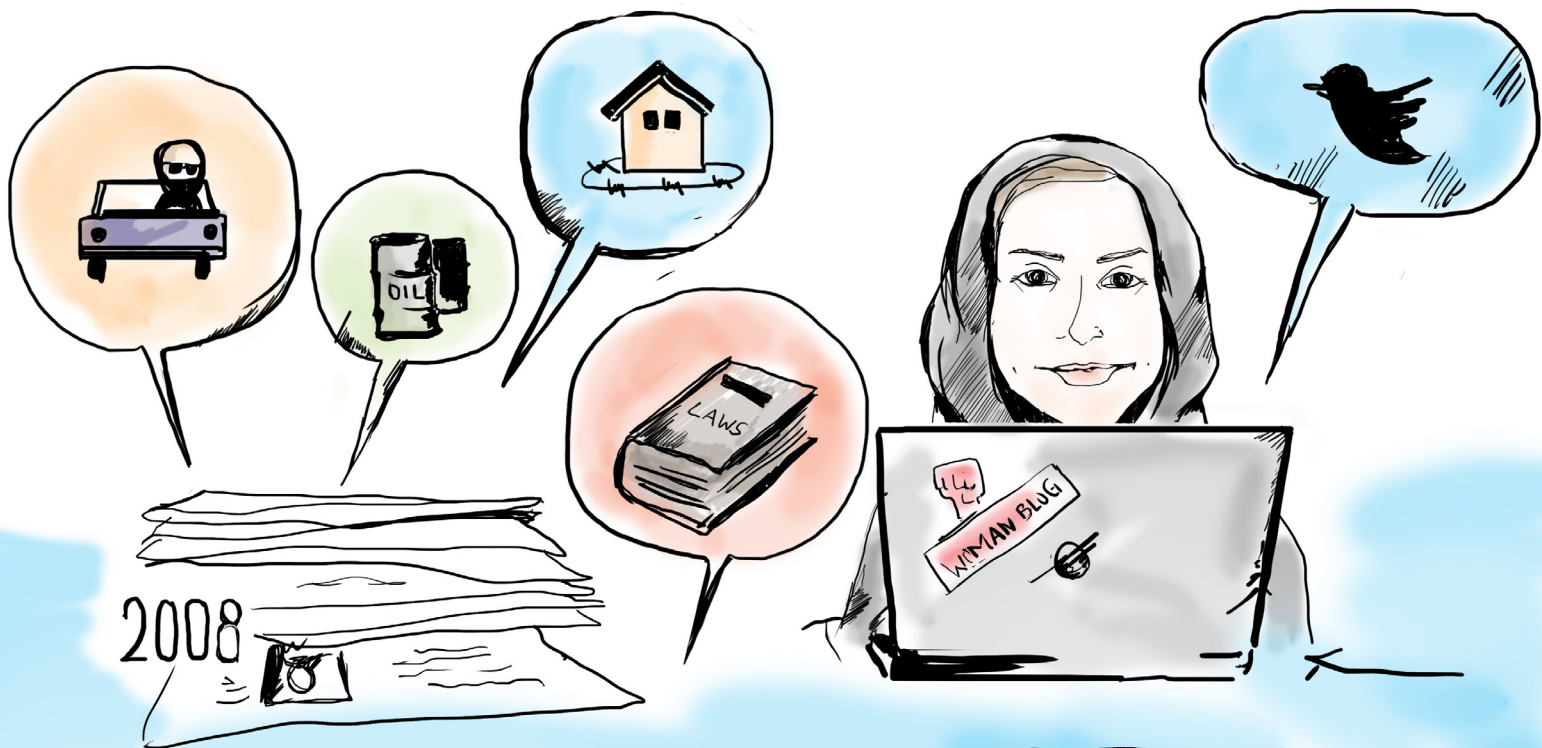
**URGENT
ACTION
FUND**

FOR WOMEN'S
HUMAN RIGHTS

DEDICATED TO THE STRONG WOMEN BEHIND BARS IN SAUDI ARABIA, THOSE WHO HAVE CHALLENGED THE STATUS QUO IN ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACES IN THE WORLD TO BE A WOMAN. WHERE YOU ARE NOW DOESN'T DEFINE YOUR ACTS OF BRAVERY AND FIERCE DESIRE TO DEFEND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE KINGDOM OF PATRIARCHY AND GUARDIANSHIP. WE OWE YOU EVERY RESPECT, AND YOUR DEEDS WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR GENERATIONS TO COME. WE WILL KEEP ADVOCATING, DEFENDING AND CALLING YOUR NAMES OUT LOUD TO REMIND YOUR CAPTORS THAT YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN AND YOU WILL BE FREE ONE DAY - FREE FROM PRISON, FREE FROM PERSECUTION, FREE FROM GUARDIANSHIP AND PATRIARCHY.







THE VISION 2030 SAUDI ARABIA REFORM PLAN: WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN SAUDI ARABIA CEASE TO EXIST

Women in Saudi Arabia have been for a long time suffering in silence under the patriarchal society and male-dominated decision-making authoritarianism on all levels. The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) has been documenting and highlighting cases of women activists and women human rights defenders (WHRDs) since 2011. Thirty out of 100 of the WHRDs' cases recorded by GCHR from the wider Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region were of Saudi WHRDs, making Saudi Arabia one of the top Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries targeting women's rights activists and defenders, according to our reports. Yet, it is believed that many cases have gone undocumented due to the closed civic space, lack of legal transparency and the multi-layered patriarchal system that normalized gender- inequality and permitted gender-based discrimination. Women who dared to defy the norms, and stand up for their rights are often subjected to various types of threats and targeting not only for their human rights activities but because of their fundamental identities as women.

Saudi Arabia is the fifth country on top of the list of [the world's most dangerous countries for women](#), according to a 2018 poll by the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The evidence-based survey's results review six key areas including health care, discrimination, cultural traditions, sexual violence, and non-sexual violence, as well as human trafficking. The survey results conclude discrimination is the main pressing issue facing women in Saudi Arabia, where thematically Saudi Arabia was ranked second after Afghanistan in discriminating against women. This ranking element assessed "job discrimination; an inability to make a livelihood, discriminatory land, property or inheritance rights; a lack of access to education and to adequate nutrition." Consequently, the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap report ranked Saudi Arabia 138 out of 144 countries for its wide gender gap - the Kingdom has even scored lower in political participation and opportunities, coming in the 140th position on the global chart.

The guardianship system is one of the main discriminatory tools used in Saudi Arabia to box in women within the legal framework of a system of male superiority and decision-making on women's behalf. The simple decisions of traveling, studying and accessing healthcare as well as marrying are bound by the approval of the male guardian. Women are often required to provide a male's permission when not specified by any written laws, such as in renting an apartment or filing a legal claim. This authoritarian system is just a sample of bigger authoritarian policies embodied in the government's tactics to target women's rights defenders and activists.

This repression of women's rights continues despite promises of reform made in the Vision 2030 plan, which has a stated ambition for Saudi Arabia to be "the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, the investment powerhouse, and the hub connecting three continents." The decision to allow women to drive was not based on justice but on economics and presented as a promotional tactic for the Crown Prince's reform agenda, hence the warnings sent to WHRDs and activists to keep quiet and disengage from any media discussion on women's rights.

GCHR has repeatedly raised the alarm about the situation of HRDs in Saudi Arabia, and in particular WHRDs, who are alone fighting a long-standing battle with no back-up or support. The lack of support for detained WHRDs in Saudi Arabia will not only affect the activists' spaces but also all women's spaces and their human rights situation in general in the kingdom. Therefore, GCHR will continue to raise the situation of detained Saudi WHRDs as one of the main concerns and an epidemic plight in the region.

