

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES.

Requesting a report on the observance of and respect for human rights
and fundamental freedom in Saudi Arabia.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Ms. WARREN, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND,
Mr. WYDEN, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. LEAHY) submitted the following res-
olution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Requesting a report on the observance of and respect for
human rights and fundamental freedom in Saudi Arabia.

Whereas, in July 2018, the Government of Saudi Arabia de-
tained prominent women rights activists Samar Badawi
and Nassima al-Sada;

Whereas the United States Department of State presented
Ms. Badawi with the 2012 International Women of Cour-
age Award in recognition of her efforts with regard to the
discriminatory male guardianship system in Saudi Ara-
bia;

Whereas the Department of State has declined to express sol-
idarity with the Government of Canada, which reacted
appropriately to news of the detention of Ms. Badawi and
Ms. al-Sada in expressing that it was “gravely concerned

about additional arrests of civil society and women’s rights activists” and calling upon “Saudi authorities to immediately release them and all other peaceful human-rights activists”;

Whereas the Government of Saudi Arabia reacted disproportionately to criticism by the Government of Canada by taking extreme retaliatory measures, including—

(1) expelling the Ambassador of Canada to Saudi Arabia and recalling the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Canada;

(2) ordering the return of citizens of Saudi Arabia living in Canada, including more than 1,000 medical students;

(3) shutting off new bilateral trade and investment with Canada; and

(4) terminating direct commercial flights on Saudi Arabian air carriers between Saudi Arabia and Canada;

Whereas Canada is an indispensable ally in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization that shares the commitment of the United States to equal rights and the rule of law and, in defense of shared interests and values, Canada has fought and sacrificed alongside the United States in each of the World Wars and has contributed to Missions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Afghanistan, the Balkans, Libya, and Central and Eastern Europe;

Whereas the arrest of Ms. Badawi and Ms. al-Sada, as well as the ongoing detention of countless others such as blogger Raif Badawi and human rights lawyer Waleed Abu al-Khair, is part of a disturbing pattern of human rights violations committed by the Government of Saudi Arabia, which are documented in more than 50 pages of

the 2017 Human Rights Report of the Department of State;

Whereas, among the human rights violations by the Government of Saudi Arabia documented in that report, are unlawful killings, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, restrictions on freedom of expression, violence and official gender discrimination against women, and criminalization of same-sex sexual activity;

Whereas the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees assesses that airstrikes carried out by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in Yemen accounted for 80 percent of all civilian casualties from December 2017 to May 2018 in the 5 governorates of Yemen most affected by fighting; and

Whereas section 502B(a)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2304(a)(2)) states that “no security assistance may be provided to any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That—

2 (1) it is the sense of the Senate that—

3 (A) the President should offer public sup-
4 port to Canada by calling upon the Government
5 of Saudi Arabia to release Samar Badawi,
6 Nassima al-Sada, Raif Badawi, Waleed Abu al-
7 Khair, and all other peaceful human rights ac-
8 tivists, journalists, and religious minorities held

1 in detention by that Government on dubious
2 charges; and

3 (B) the arrest of women's rights activists
4 and their supporters since May 2018 is con-
5 trary to the stated goals of the Government of
6 Saudi Arabia; and

7 (2) the Senate requests, pursuant to section
8 502B(c)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961
9 (22 U.S.C. 2304(c)(1)), that the Secretary of State
10 submit to Congress a statement, as required by that
11 section, setting forth all the available information
12 about observance of and respect for human rights
13 and fundamental freedom in Saudi Arabia.