By email only ukemb@mofa.gov.sa

2 January 2019

Your Excellency,

Detention Review Panel for Detained Women Activists

You will be aware that there have been some serious allegations made about the treatment of Women Activist Detainees in Saudi Arabia. I have been asked by ITN solicitors, on behalf of a Saudi Arabian citizen (the Client), to convene together an independent panel of UK parliamentarians to review the conditions of these Women Activist Detainees (the Detainees) currently in detention in Saudi Arabia.

Having considered the request I have identified panel members that I believe should collectively command confidence from your government, as well as the families of the Detainees. I have accepted the invitation.

I am therefore writing to you as Chair of the Detention Review Panel for Detained Women Activists who have been detained and/or imprisoned by the authorities in Saudi Arabia. We would like your assistance in arranging a visit to Saudi Arabia to visit and speak with these Detainees.

The Panel has made clear to the Client, through ITN Solicitors, that our terms of reference are exclusively restricted to the conditions of their detention and their health. We would of course make representations on behalf of the Detainees that they should be subject to legal proceedings which meet international standards.

The Panel Members

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the members of the Panel that we propose will visit the Detainees in Saudi Arabia.
Chair: Crispin Blunt MP

I will chair the Detention Review Panel. I am the Conservative Party Member of Parliament for Reigate, served as Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee 2015-17, was Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Justice with responsibility for Prisons and Probation 2010-12. I am currently Vice-Chairman of both the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Saudi Arabia and the Conservative Middle East Council. Of further relevant experience I served as Chairman of the Conservative Middle East Council (CMEC) 2003-8 and as co-chair of the Council for the Advancement of Arab British Understanding (CAABU).

Dr Paul Williams MP

Dr Paul Williams MP is a Labour Party Member of Parliament, a family physician and a member of the Health and Social Care Select Committee. Dr Williams acted as a Forensic Medical Examiner working with the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, documenting injuries from refugees who alleged mistreatment and torture.

Layla Moran MP

Layla Moran MP is a Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for Oxford West and Abingdon. Before entering Parliament, she was a Physics teacher. She is now the Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Education and sits on the Public Accounts Committee. She is the first MP of Palestinian heritage.

Dr. Tim Moloney QC

Dr Moloney QC is the Deputy Head of Doughty Street Chambers. He is ranked as a “star individual” and leading a British lawyer by independent directories for his work in Crime and International law. He has been appointed as independent Legal Counsel to the Panel.

Tayab Ali

Tayab Ali is a Partner of leading London human rights law firm, ITN Solicitors. He is rated as leading lawyer by independent legal directories. Tayab heads ITN Solicitors’ Political, Diplomatic and International Law Department and has represented clients in numerous high-profile legal cases in the UK and internationally. Tayab is the Panel’s Legal Secretariat and Rapporteur.

The Mandate

The Panel has been convened by ITN Solicitors on behalf of their client who is a Saudi Arabian Citizen. The identity of the Client will remain anonymous.

The Panel will conduct an independent review and have been requested to inquire into the conditions of the Detainee’s detention and treatment.

The findings of the Panel will be presented in written report.

Matters to be Reviewed

You will be aware that there have been some very serious allegations made about the treatment of Women Activist Detainees in Saudi Arabia. The allegations, recorded by human rights organisations including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, appear to be credible, but we acknowledge that the Saudi Arabian government say that the allegations are unfounded.

We would hope that during our visit we would be given access to Detainees including those named in Human Rights Watch report dated 20 November 2018. The report names the Detainees as “Loujain
Correspondence should be sent by email to tali@itnsolicitors.com or by post to The Chair of the Detention Review Panel c/o Tayab Ali, Legal Secretariat to the DRP, ITN Solicitors, 19-21 Great Tower Street, London, EC3R 5AQ

al-Hathloul, Aziza al-Yousef, Eman al-Nafjan, Noof Abdelaziz, Mayaa al-Zahrani, Samar Badawi, Nassima al-Saada, and Hatoon al-Fassi, all women’s rights activists, as well as male supporters of the movement, including Ibrahim al-Modaimeegh, a lawyer; Abdulaziz Meshaal, a philanthropist; and Mohammed Rabea; a social activist”.¹

The allegations made in a number of reports about some of these Detainees include:

- Torture with electric shocks, being tied down to a bed and whipping with an “egal” (head scarf rope/band).
- Sexual harassment
- Threats of rape
- Assault
- Threats of death penalty or life imprisonment for “treason”
- Denial of access to family members
- Denial of access to independent lawyers.

We are in the process of reviewing information and evidence provided to us. We hope to be able to gather direct testimony from the Detainees during our visit in Saudi Arabia. In addition to meeting with the Detainees we would also like to meet and interview officials responsible for and tasked with the detention of the Detainees. We would like the opportunity to gather evidence from as many sources as possible.

The allegations made and recorded by these human rights advocates are extremely damaging to the credibility of the progressive reforms announced recently by the Saudi Arabian government.

We hope that following our review we will be able to assist Saudi Arabia in regaining confidence from the international community that its commitment to progressive reform and the protection of the rights of peaceful pro-reform activists is both credible and sincere.

We hope that you are able to assist in facilitating the Panel’s visit to Saudi Arabia. We would be happy to attend the Embassy to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss the matter in person should that be of assistance to you.

Should you have any queries with regards this matter we ask that you contact Mr Tayab Ali of ITN Solicitors who will act as Legal Secretary to Panel. Mr Ali can be contacted by email via tali@itnsolicitors.com

We kindly ask that you provide an urgent response to this letter confirming that you will assist us in visiting the Detainees in Saudi Arabia. In light of the urgency of this matter we ask that you provide the response by Wednesday 9 January 2019.

Yours sincerely

Crispin Blunt MP
Chair to the Detention Review Panel