

'It's not just Loujain'

Wednesday 10 February, 2021

10 studies in courage - the women human rights defenders behind bars in Saudi Arabia

Briefing from Grant Liberty

As the world awaits Loujain al-Hathloul's release this week ([expected Thursday 11 February](#)), it is important to remember two crucial points.

First – she will not be free in any meaningful sense. She remains under probation, under a travel ban and unable to express herself freely.

Second – she is not alone. Loujain al-Hathloul is rightly feted for her fearless campaigning for women's rights. This briefing seeks to shine a spotlight on the women who partner Loujain in the campaign for human rights in Saudi Arabia. Some are better known than others, but none enjoy the profile of Loujain in the international community.

This briefing seeks to address that issue with a very clear purpose. If Loujain is released as expected the Saudi authorities and their expensive PR teams will tell the world that the matter is closed. But nothing could be further from the truth. This report details 10 profiles in courage in three categories:

The Victims of the 2018 crackdown on women's rights activists

Of those arrested alongside **Loujain al-Hathloul**, 4 remain in prison:

- **Nouf Abdulaziz** – a campaigning journalist who spoke up for Loujain on her arrest
- **Mayaa al-Zahrani** – arrested for tweeting in support of women's rights activists
- **Nassima al-Sadah** – a leader of the 2012 Women2Drive campaign, and putative municipal elections candidate
- **Samar Badawi** – award winning women's rights activist who has campaigned against everything from the male guardianship law to the driving ban

The Women at the forefront of the fight for Shia rights

- **Israa al-Ghomgham** – once faced the death penalty for peaceful activism
- **Naima al-Matrood** – imprisoned for attending peaceful protests and social media posts
- **Fatima al-Nassif** – arrested after using her nursing training to care for injured protesters
- **Noor al-Muslim** – a visual artist and student arrested following her prominent role in defending Shia religious sites

Women Writers

- **Khadija al-Harbi** – arrested while pregnant and forced to give birth in prison
- **Maha al-Rafidi** – trainee journalists imprisoned thanks to posts on social media

Full briefing can be found here: <https://grantliberty.org/loujain-is-not-alone/>

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