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The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and would like to refer to the letter received on the 13 January 2023 regarding the request of information for the preparation of the thematic report focusing on "violence, abuse and neglect of older persons". In that regard, the Permanent Mission has the honor to attach herewith the contribution of the Government of Saudi Arabia on the aforementioned letter.

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, the assurance of its highest consideration.



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### **The most notable measures taken by Saudi Arabia regarding the protection of the elderly**

This document is to inform the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older person's forthcoming report to the 54th session of the Human Rights Council, which will focus on violence, abuse and neglect of older persons.

#### **Related Legislation and Laws:**

1. Article 26 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates: “The State shall protect human rights in accordance with Sharia.”
2. Article 27 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates: “The State shall guarantee the rights of citizens and their families in cases of emergency, sickness, disability, and old age, and shall support the social security system and encourage institutions and individuals to participate in charitable work.”
3. Article 31 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates: “The State shall be responsible for public health and shall provide health care to every citizen.”
4. The Law of Protection from Abuse was issued pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/52, dated 14/6/2022. This Law defines abuse as “any form of exploitation; physical, psychological or sexual, or the threat thereof committed by an individual against another exceeding the limits of powers and responsibilities derived from guardianship, dependency, sponsorship, trusteeship or livelihood relationship. The term "abuse" shall include the omission or negligence of an individual in the performance of his duties or responsibilities in providing basic needs for a family member or an individual for whom he is legally responsible.”. This Law aims to ensure protection for all from all forms of abuse, and to enact the necessary legal measures to hold abusers accountable and punish them. The number of reports on people who have been exposed to abuse has decreased over the last three years to 259 males and 236 females with a total of 495 cases, It was 1446 cases in last available statistic. This decrease in the number of abuse cases can be attributed to the great efforts exerted by Saudi Arabia and the society’s growing awareness of the heavenly message of Islam and Prophet Mohammad’s traditions, which urge people to care for and protect the elderly. The laws and legislations governing this issue have also played a vital role in this decrease.
5. The Elderly Rights and Care Law was issued pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/47, dated 6/1/2022. Article 1 of this Law defines the elderly as any person who has reached 60 years and over. In Article 2, the Law states that the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, in coordination with the relevant entities, should endeavor to enable the elderly to live in an





environment that preserves their rights and dignity, and to raise awareness and promote community education of the rights of the elderly. Article 15(1) stipulates: "The breadwinner who takes care of an elderly person shall not dispose of his money without his consent." Paragraph (2) of the same Article states: "The breadwinner shall not deliberately violate the rules for protection and care of an elderly person in need." Paragraph (3) of the same Article states: "An elderly person's money shall not be intentionally misused by any person entrusted to dispose thereof." Article 16 of the Law also stipulates: "Any person who violates the provisions of Articles 3 and 15 of this Law shall be punished by one or more of the following penalties:

- a. Imprisonment for up to one year.
- b. A maximum fine of 500,000 riyals.
- c. The penalty may be doubled for the violator in the event of recidivism, provided that it does not exceed twice the maximum statutory penalty.

Article 21 of the Law stipulates: "The provisions and procedures stipulated in this Law shall not prejudice the following: ...; 2. Any provision that guarantees better protection for the elderly, as provided for in another law or any obligation of the Kingdom as a result of an international agreement to which it is a party."

6. Article 6 of the Council of Ministers Resolution no. 443, dated 25/7/2016, approving the Statute of the Family Affairs Council, provides for the formation of technical committees, including the Committee for the Elderly, which is concerned with the affairs of elderly people.
7. The Health Law issued by Royal Decree No. M/11, dated 4/6/2002, states: "This Law aims to ensure provision and organization of comprehensive and integrated health care for the whole population in an equitable and accessible manner."
8. His Excellency the Minister of Justice issued Resolution no. 7207, dated 29/1/2020, to amend the Implementing Regulations of the Enforcement Law with regard to regulating the issue of enforcement-related imprisonment. A Paragraph (4) was added to Article 84 of said Regulations, providing for the following: "Imprisonment may not be enforced in cases where the debtor is sixty years old or more or has minor children and his/her spouse is dead or imprisoned for any reason."
9. The Disability Care Law issued by Royal Decree No. M/37, dated 19/12/2000 and the Council of Ministers Resolution no. 224, dated 11/12/2000. Article 2 of this Law stipulates "The State shall guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to protection, care and rehabilitation services, shall encourage organizations and individuals to contribute to charitable work in the field of disability, and shall provide such services through specialist bodies in all fields (health, training, qualification, education, social work, employment, culture, sports, media, and complementary services).
10. Article 2 of the Health Law issued by Royal Decree No. M/11, dated 4/6/2002, states: "This Law aims to ensure provision and organization of comprehensive and integrated health care for the whole population in an equitable and accessible manner."





11. The Council of Ministers Resolution no. 198, dated 11/12/2018 provides for the establishment of private elderly care centers, namely social centers which provide a number of services, activities and programs to older persons. These centers aim to mitigate the effects of psychological and physical pressures, and the feelings of loneliness and isolation among the elderly.
12. The Law of Civil Society Associations and Organizations was issued by Royal Decree No. M/8, date 19/2/1437H. The number of these associations and organizations has increased to more than 1910, covering various fields (housing, elderly, productive families, motherhood and childhood, volunteer work, disability, family development, health, charity, and others). These associations provide a varied number of services and programs targeting all family members, including the elderly.
13. The National Family Safety Program was established pursuant to Royal Order no. 11471/M, dated 18/11/2005 under the supervision of the Health Affairs Department at the Ministry of National Guard in Saudi Arabia. It is a non-governmental program, aims to protect the family from violence, by monitoring and studying cases of abuse and informing competent entities of such cases. It also aims to raise the awareness of society, at both the individual and institutional levels, of the harms and negative effects of family violence on society in the long term. Following is a statistical account of the cases of violence and neglect (physical, sexual, and psychological) detected over the last three years:

Female	Male	Total
118	81	199

#### **Services and Programs:**

- The Ministry of Health provides many programs to improve the health and well-being of the elderly, in line with the strategy of the Ministry of Health and the Kingdom's Vision 2030, including the following:
- Providing primary health care services at the Ministry of Health, such as the Elderly Health Care Program: the early detection program for physical, mental and psychological health problems, which contributed to reducing the rates of diseases, disability and mortality, enhancing the elderly's health and improving their quality of life
  - The Ministry provides primary health care centers in all cities and villages and is concerned with collecting and updating data for the elderly visitors of these centers and following up on their health conditions and facilitating their visits to these centers.
  - The Ministry has established a newly developed unit for the elderly in various hospitals, to be concerned with providing health care services for older people.





- The Ministry provides a Home Health Care Services program, which provides continuous and comprehensive health care and follow-up services for patients who cannot access health facilities in their residence places.
- The Support Offices Program of the Ministry of Health provides logistical services for people with disabilities, the elderly, and home medical services, at the regional and governorate levels.
  
- The Ministry of Health also provides a financial subsidy program for relevant medical devices, which enables elderly people with disabilities to obtain financial subsidy for assistive medical devices according to the regulatory conditions and controls. Financial and in-kind assistance is also disbursed to the needy elderly and their families through the Social Security Department of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. There is also fruitful cooperation between the relevant entities in charge of evaluating cases and providing assistance depending on priority needs and economic entitlement according to the social studies of each case.
- In the context of providing comprehensive care for the elderly, reference hospitals, specialized clinics and home health care centers provide training programs for caregivers in social care homes.
- The Ministry of Health has added a tab on its website which is called "Health Awareness," containing educational content about the elderly's health and covering several topics, such as Alzheimer's, aging, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, elder abuse, and other areas, in addition to broadcasting awareness messages through social media.
- *The Ministry of Health has issued several digital health applications such as: SEHA* application for remote medical consultations; *MAWID* application, which enables beneficiaries to book appointments at primary health care centers; *Sehaty* application, through which health services are provided to individuals, such as facilitating access to Covid-19 testing or vaccination places; *Wasfaty* application, which is an advanced electronic service aiming to improve the level of health services and ensure the availability of medicines; Medical Consultation service through the 937 Call Center service; *Qareboon* application, which is an electronic service provided by the National Center for Mental Health Promotion.
- Elderly care homes have been designated to receive older persons of both sexes who are unable to work due to old age, or who cannot care for themselves, or patients who have reached the age of 60 and are suffering from physical or mental incapacity that has made them unable to work or take care of themselves, provided that they do not suffer from communicable diseases, and that they have no relatives to care for them. Currently, there are 8 care homes for the elderly of both sexes distributed throughout the Kingdom.





- Civil society institutions concerned with the elderly also provide a number of services to this segment of society through 224 entities, including specialized associations, humanitarian donors and neighborhood centers. The number of elderly volunteers has reached 2365 in 2022.
- As far as the economic security of the elderly is concerned, the Social Security Law was issued pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/32, dated 19/11/2020, aims to establish the necessary means and measures to address cases of poverty in society, and to provide a minimum level of income that meets the basic needs of each beneficiary.
- The Kingdom has prepared a regional report measuring progress made in the Fourth Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.
- The participation of government and private entities in all sectors in raising awareness and highlighting the importance of respecting and appreciation of elderly people and avoiding any abuse or maltreatment of them through several means (sermons at mosques, television and radio programs, social media, etc.).
- The Family Affairs Council has launched a number of initiatives targeting the elderly within the National Family Strategy. These initiatives include the following, among others:
  1. The “*Tammini ‘annak*” (Let me know how you are doing!) initiative, which aims to eliminate social isolation; and the “*Kabiruna ‘aziz*” (We respect the elderly!) initiative, which aims to preserve the important position of the elderly within the family by emphasizing how important their knowledge and experience are for their family members.
  2. Activating international day events (e.g. the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15<sup>th</sup> annually, and the International Day for Older Persons on October 1<sup>st</sup> annually. These two events focus on intensifying awareness, education and guidance directed to the family and society concerning attention, care and appreciation for older people, with the participation of the relevant entities. Visits and training courses for caregivers and service providers for the elderly are also carried out.
  3. Launching extensive media courses and campaigns to contribute to eliminating digital illiteracy for the elderly, in order to help them to rely on themselves and facilitate their daily lives and activities.
  4. Holding meetings and partnerships with the relevant entities regarding protection from abuse (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, Directorate of Public Security, Human Rights Commission) to discuss issues related to protection and review annual statistics.
  5. Implementing family visit programs for the elderly, in which a number of volunteers, service providers and caregivers participate in order to eliminate social isolation.





6. Organizing training courses and intensive campaigns targeting the elderly and their families in order to eliminate digital illiteracy and help the elderly to rely on themselves without needing help from others to avoid exploitation.
  7. Launching a walking sports program in all regions with the aim to encourage the elderly to engage in exercise.
- Saudi Arabia has taken a set of measures to protect the elderly from abuse during the Coronavirus pandemic:
1. Establishing the Health Endowment Fund for home care.
  2. Establishing a community fund to deliver medicines and foodstuffs.
  3. Taking financial measures to mitigate economic effects by supporting needy families and postponing the payment of specific fees.
  4. Taking precautionary measures for prevention and treatment through imposing curfews and proactive testing.
  5. Launching the unified national platform at a number of ministries to provide health and social services.
  6. The Family Affairs Council, represented by the Committee for the Elderly, launched a number of initiatives through sending awareness-raising messages, organizing exhibitions and dialogue seminars, and issuing a guiding manual for dealing with the elderly.

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