

Most prominent measures taken by Saudi Arabia to guarantee freedom of opinion and expression

This Document has been drafted to contribute to the preparation of the thematic report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, which will be presented to the UN General Assembly during its 78th session in October 2023 and will address the topic: “Freedom of expression and the gender dimensions of disinformation” in accordance with the Human Rights Council Resolution no. 52/9.

Following is an account of the most prominent measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which respond to the questions contained in the questionnaire prepared by the Special Rapporteur in this regard:

- **What measures have States, digital companies or international organizations taken to combat ‘gendered disinformation’?**
- **To what extent do these responses comply with international human rights law standards, in particular freedom of expression?**
- **How effective have these measures been in addressing ‘gendered disinformation’?**
- **Please provide references / links to legal or policy frameworks developed to address the gender dimensions of disinformation.**
- **Please provide references / links to relevant case law concerning this topic.**



Saudi Arabia has taken several measures to promote the right to freedom of expression and opinion in the media, through developing a legal and institutional framework, this including the following:

- The Council of Ministers issued Resolution no. 713, dated 22/8/2017, which ordered government bodies to publish on their websites the drafts and rules, regulations or internal decisions falling within their competence, to allow relevant authorities and individuals to express their opinions and observations thereon.
- The Audiovisual Media Law was promulgated pursuant to Royal Decree no. M/33, dated 13/12/2017. Article 5 of this Law emphasizes respect for freedom of opinion and expression in accordance with the relevant laws and controls.
- The King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue provides a suitable platform for the discussion of several problems and issues that concern citizens, and possesses complete control and independence in choosing its topics and practices, through holding national meetings, conferences, seminars and panel discussions.
- The Kingdom's laws guarantee freedom of opinion and expression for every person without any discrimination in order to protect other rights, given that human rights are complementary and interdependent. To avoid any negative effect on the implementation of this right, the Kingdom adopts a concept of freedom of expression that is consistent with the relevant international standards. Article 39 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates: "Mass and publishing media and all means of expression shall use decent language and





adhere to State laws. They shall contribute towards educating the nation and supporting its unity. Whatever leads to sedition and division, or undermines the security of the State or its public relations, or is injurious to the honor and rights of man, shall be prohibited. Laws shall set forth provisions to achieve this.

- In addition, the Kingdom's laws have guaranteed freedom of opinion and expression. Article 8 of the Law of Printed Materials and Publication states that "Freedom of expression is guaranteed through all means of publication within the provisions of Sharia and law." Moreover, Article 4 of the Regulations for Electronic Publishing indicates that among the objectives of these Regulations are to support a culture of dialogue and diversity, and to perpetuate a culture of human rights represented in guaranteeing the freedom of expression to all people in accordance with the provisions of the law. These Regulations also provide for the rights of people to create and register any form of electronic publishing, as well as spreading the culture of the new media and its channels in society.
- The Kingdom seeks to promote the right to freedom of expression and opinion in the media, through several measures, most notably encouraging the issuance of many paper and electronic newspapers and establishing an independent authority for radio and television and an independent public authority for audiovisual media, as well as establishing many radio stations and television channels in multiple languages, and the King Abdulaziz Center for National





Dialogue also invites to its meetings representatives of all segments of society.

It should be noted that these efforts are combined with each other in order to combat 'gendered disinformation'.

