

## **Online European Parliamentary Briefing**

hosted by Hon Pierfrancesco Majorino, Member of the European Parliament

### **BEHIND BARS: WHEN THE LAW IS TURNED INTO REPRESSION**

#### **The cases of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates**

8 November 2022 18:00 – 19:00

on line event

Following the brief period of hope for democratic reforms and advancement of individual, political and economic human rights in the Middle East and North Africa, which swept the Region in early 2011, restoration of the old power structures came back with a vengeance. While certain countries of the Region have been engulfed in open war, such as Syria, Libya and Yemen; others have witnessed the violent repression of the popular movements which led the Arab Spring, such as Bahrain and Egypt. The few countries which did not experienced unrests and strife, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, did so by exporting political instability abroad and strengthening their use of the judiciary, coupled with massive and intrusive use of new technologies, as a tool of oppression of any kind of dissent.

The continued and intensifying crackdown by state authorities and security forces on the fundamental rights of human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers, trade unionists, women's rights activists, political opponents, including their family members, and civil society organisations in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE represent a broader pattern of intimidation and repression of the whole society.

The ruthless use of the judiciary and its subjugation to the will of those in power - including the practice of continuously postponing hearings to keep people in pre-trial detention indefinitely; the harsh, unjust and unjustified sentences handed down to opposition figures for exercising their universal rights, including in particular freedom of expression; the continued detention of human rights activists, even after these unfair sentences have been served – is the common denominator in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE, which amounts to a use of the judiciary as a tool of oppression, leading to a phenomenon also known as rule by law, the opposite of the rule of law, which incorporate a non-independent judiciary into the repressive machinery of the regimes.

The cases of Ahmed Mansoor in UAE, Loujain al-Hathloul in Saudi Arabia and Karim Ennarah and Patrick George Zaki in Egypt, are only illustrative cases of the political use of the law for curbing fundamental rights, criminalise the work of human rights defenders and crackdown on the development of an independent and free civil society; in other words, to stop and eliminate any possibility for democratic development and enjoyment of fundamental freedoms.

The European Parliament has repeatedly condemned and stigmatised, through the instrument of Rule 144 (debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law) and thematic hearings, the abuses and human rights violations carried out through the politicisation of the judicial power and the courts system by the regimes ruling in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE. This on-line event aims at exposing the practices and methods through which democracy advocates, human rights defenders and opposition figures are repressed and silenced by the very judicial and legislative tools which should protect and defend fundamental human rights.

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**PROGRAM**

**Chair:** Hon. Pierfrancesco Majorino, DEVE vice chair, ING2&DMED member

**Panel:** Jess Kelly, Journalist, wife of Karim Ennarah,  
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)  
Ahmed Al Nuaimi, UAE Human Rights Defender  
Lina al-Hathloul, Head of Monitoring and Communications at  
ALQST For human rights, sister of women's rights activist Loujain  
al-Hathloul

**Closing Remarks:** Niccolo' Figa'-Talamanca, Secretary General, NPWJ

**Pierfrancesco Majorino** is Member of the European Parliament, vice - chair of the development committee, he is also member of the Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean. Majorino has always been committed to the defence of human rights and has followed the cases of both Giulio Regeni and Patrick Zaki very closely.

**Jess Kelly** is a BAFTA nominated doc filmmaker focus on Middle East, she is Karim Ennarah's wife. Karim Ennarah is the criminal justice unit director at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) Mr. Ennarah is a human rights worker he was at a beach resort in South Sinai back in 2020 when he was arrested and accused of joining a terrorist group and "spreading false news". He is still detained in a prison in Cairo.

**Lina Al Hathloul** Lina Al Hathloul is head of Monitoring and Communications at ALQST For human rights, and known for her relentless advocacy to free her sister, Loujain Al-Hathloul. Loujain Al Hathloul is a Saudi women's rights activist, a social media figure, and political prisoner. Al-Hathloul is known both for her role in the women to drive movement and in opposing the Saudi male guardianship system. She was released after 3 years in prison on 10 February 2021, but lives under a travel ban.

**Ahmed Al Nuaimi**, currently resides in the United Kingdom (UK) and he has been unable to return to the UAE since 2012 out of fear of arrest. Also, Muhammad Al Nuaimi, Ahmed's son, had been placed under a travel ban as a form of reprisal for his father's activism.