

Alicia Gulasa
Global Impact STEM Academy
Springfield, OH
Saudi Arabia, Human Rights

Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights

People often forget about the privileges and benefits that come when people are born in a certain country. When people are not in the midst of these issues it is not talked about enough. Countries are bound to be different but basic needs should always be met. These basic needs include water, food, shelter, and some often forget about rights. Human rights are very important and without them, the people in that country's life can be miserable. Human rights are highly important. The topic of human rights is a very broad term; under this umbrella the term human rights falls: women's rights, education, religion, etc. Many things affect human rights including government, policies, discrimination, history of the country, etc. This paper will be focusing on women in Saudi Arabia. Traditionally men have had more rights than women, not only in this country but in many others throughout history. These women should have the rights they deserve and something needs to be changed. The change will never be easy or a quick fix but starting and continuing to improve women's rights will improve the country as a whole.

1. Background Information on Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is based a lot on the history of the land. The government holds a monarchy system and follows Islamic Law. The climate in the country has three main parts. Most of the land is desert with some steppe and smaller areas with very humid land. With this information, most of the land in this country is urban, and only sixteen percent is rural land. Saudi Arabia has a population of thirty-four million people. Most of the population is natives that are originally from Saudi Arabia. Over sixty percent of the population has the nationality of Saudi Arabia. The country is able to produce some food for its people but most foods are imported because less than two percent of the land is for agriculture. Most commonly wheat, eggs, and milk are the largest amounts of food that is produced in the country. The country does not have a lot of rainfall which makes growing and excelling in agriculture harder. Most of the land that grows crops is rain-fed dry farming because of the lack of rainfall. Saudi Arabia does not have rich soil nor a great water supply but the country is able to supply most of it to its people, some are less fortunate than others. Some recently found water sources have been found but they are under the basic layer of the earth and can be hard to make use as a resource at times. The country has resources of oil and some mining components as well. Agriculture has definitely expanded in the country but it still needs improvement. Improvement is very hard because of the climate that is in Saudi Arabia. Most places in Saudi Arabia have access to food, water, and shelter but there are areas in the country that are either in poverty or on the edge of it. The government also does not release a lot of its statistics or information about its country (Britannica).

The daily life that allows a person in Saudi Arabia depends mostly on gender, along with some other things. Women definitely get the short end of the stick. In the past, there was a legal male guardian system that followed women. Women had to legally have a male to be able to do almost anything. This male guardian would be their father until they married, then if a divorce were to happen their son, if they had one, would be their male guardian. The male guardian system was able to control what women wore, what they did, where they lived, where they could go, and many other things. The law has now been lifted and now the legal portion is not there anymore but the society of the people in Saudi Arabia has not

changed. After women are twenty-one they do not legally need to have a male guardian anymore but they would be restricted without one. Many companies and people in the country do not agree with the end of the male guardianship so women have their rights taken from them. With the society in Saudi Arabia, people often live very close to their families and even their distant relatives. Jobs are easier for men to get than women because of the recent shift in gender roles. Most women are made to stay home while men go out and work. Education in Saudi Arabia is available to men and women, the education is based on the Islamic religion. Healthcare follows most of the same lines of education except for if women do not have a male guardian it may be harder to get healthcare. Most families do have access to food, water, and shelter (Saudi Arabian Culture).

2. Issues being faced

Saudi Arabia has been faced with a number of issues including human rights. Although this paper is focused on women's rights that does not mean other rights are not violated. There are numerous issues with their imprisonment and punishment against people who have not followed the law. People have been punished by death for things that resulted in no harm to people and many think that it is not right. Saudi Arabia also has an on-going conflict with the counties surrounding them and bombing, along with other acts that have taken place (World Report 2022). The country has been seen to not allow people that are a part of the LGBTQ+ community to not date and if done punishments have taken place (2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Saudi Arabia). Saudi Arabia is very native and most people are part of the Islam religion. People are allowed to have their own religion but not spread it; therefore churches, temples, or other worships that are not in the Islamic religion is not allowed. Journalists have been labeled as missing which has brought a lot of attention to the country. Jamal Khashoggi is one of the largest talked about journalists who was in Saudi Arabia and was murdered in October of 2018. This is only one of the instances that have happened, there have been others. Activists have also been held captive and claims of sexual assault have been made against the workers in the area where they were contained. Not to mention that these protesters and activists were not doing anything, in the eyes of many people, wrong (Saudi Arabia: Events 2019).

Women's rights are one of the big human rights that are being violated in Saudi Arabia. The rights of women are being granted slowly, but women still suffer today. Over the past few years, legally Saudi Arabia has "undone" the male guardian system by not forcing it by law but this still puts women at a disadvantage because no laws or policies are set in place about discrimination against women. The women being affected are of all ages. Women are still not able to leave their country of free will and are tracked by an app called Absher which allows men to track where women are (Saudi Arabia: Travel Restrictions). There are still so many steps needed to take to make gender equality. Women protesters and activists are being detained and assaulted in many cases. Only in 2019 were women granted the rights to register births and deaths, have family records, be in charge of what happens to their own bodies, and be able to travel without a guardian by their side. The biggest issues that need to be addressed are women being allowed to leave prison, marry, divorce, or exit domestic shelters. Not to mention giving back to the women who were harmed by their guardians in the past or in the future. Women still have to have a male guardian until the age of twenty-one, which allows them to leave the country if they are lucky enough to get a passport. Passports have been harder for women to obtain because of the recent changes. Many places might refuse to provide a passport or online resources do not have the updates they should require for these women to get their passports. Women are able to apply for jobs in most places but the pay is not equal between genders. Men and women are often segregated in their jobs as well because of the past laws in the country. Young women are vulnerable to being forced into marriage and having kids they did not consent to. These issues can go on and on but something needs to change. These women are at risk of harm every day, if something is not done (Ending Male Guardianship In Saudi Arabia).

In many countries, including Saudi Arabia, women's rights and food scarcity are related and intertwined. In an overall view of the correlation between women's rights and food security, the main issues are access to valuable education, land, water, and livestock rights. As of right now, women in Saudi Arabia do not have enough access to confidently say they can easily get an education that includes agricultural information based on gender stereotypes in society. The women in Saudi Arabia who are under male guardianship also could be denied the right to work in agriculture. Even if a woman were to try and provide for her family or themselves with farming, making a good product out of it would be extremely hard, given the society in Saudi Arabia. Women's pay is not equal, therefore selling any agricultural products would be harder for a woman than for a man. Even in Saudi Arabia, there is not much land for agriculture which makes women's rights and food security even worse. It would be an important improvement to look into making agriculture more available to women in order to help food security in Saudi Arabia. When looking at statistics in most developing countries sixty-eighty percent of the food comes from women (Food Security and Gender).

3. Solutions

Correcting rights in any country is not an easy or quick process. No country really wants to admit that what they are doing is bad so they will stray away from fixing and addressing it. There is a process of three main things that can help with giving women their rights which include informing people, removing the Absher app, and making laws and regulations to end the male guardianship system in all. Besides the three main things that can help with giving women's rights back, the society in the country itself needs to see the problem with the lack of rights along with how it can benefit everyone in the country.

Before talking about the three main things to help women in Saudi Arabia, talking about the benefits is needed. Allowing women to trade easily and have all information accessible to them gives the country the potential for economic development. This could help with the potential for many things and can often increase the happiness of people in the country overall. Along with trade, making more jobs gender-neutral can allow women to provide for themselves or their families. Even though the society in Saudi Arabia is based on men working and women staying home, there are people in odd and hard situations. Once the country can maybe see that see people need help to live, they may be more sympathetic to these people. This also allows for women to feel equal, they are human and go through struggles just as a man could. Creating more jobs that welcome women and all people can help the country as well. The last potential benefit is ensuring that women have access to technology. In most developing countries there is about a thirty-one percent gap in women being able to access the internet. In Saudi Arabia, this could help women so much to be allowed easily accessible access to the internet for finding jobs, which would better help the economy, along with getting passports and communicating with friends and family. The overall idea is that helping women does not only benefit women, it helps the country as a whole. Giving people good human rights, and changing society to see that, will always have good benefits. (Ramsay)

The first step in the process is to inform people about the problems in this country. There is an infinite way to inform people about the issues in Saudi Arabia but gathering the target audience is the hardest part. Informing people who have connections with either organizations or journalists that are able to get the information out to people, who have the ability to make a change would be the target audience. Starting off locally could be the first step because informing people is good and helps lessen the time it takes to get people the rights they deserve. The local government could communicate to the state and put out information to volunteer groups that might be interested in spreading awareness about what is

happening in Saudi Arabia. This first step would be a baseline start to the process, nothing can work if a constant group of people is not there.

The second step would include talking to Google Play and Apple. The Absher app is found on both platforms and has refused to remove it. After people are informed and some organizations have either been made or joined to help this country, they could inform these companies about the inhumane acts this app is allowing. Without the Absher app women would not be tracked and hopefully, after this is set in place more publicity will come. This publicity, from both steps, will cause stress on Saudi Arabia. The stress can, in hopes, push the time it takes for the issues to be addressed to lessen.

The last step of the process is the most important. After the building of the publicity and the number of volunteers, organizations, and any information that is spread, Saudi Arabia will hopefully start addressing the issue. The logic behind this is that Saudi Arabia has responded to feedback on people's views of the country. This gives knowledge that this country does care about how they are perceived by other countries, to an extent. Saudi Arabia will be hopefully willing to set laws regarding discrimination against women. The main law that should be implemented is that over the age of eighteen, a person has the right to make their own decisions and create gender equality. Other laws that should be created are allowing women to be guardians of their own kids and cannot be discriminated against by clothing, etc.

If Saudi Arabia does not comply with the law changes then the next best course of action would be to decrease the age women do not technically have to have a male guardian. The age as of now is twenty-one so turning that age to eighteen could help women get on their own and hopefully be able to put themselves in a better position than with their past male guardians.

4. Conclusion

Overall Saudi Arabia has had many human rights issues and women's rights are one of the highest. With time Saudi Arabia could help their population if the government and other parties help bring attention to these issues and addressed them. Although this paper was about women's rights specifically, remembering that Saudi Arabia also has other issues needed to be addressed is vital. There are other issues in this country as spoken about earlier in the paper. With the work from the process of helping improve women's rights hopefully the women in Saudi Arabia will be able to live more freely and be an individual of their own instead of being in a shadow of a male guardian. Time is the only wait, women's rights are brought to attention every day. At the end of the day gender equality is an ongoing goal for basically all countries, but there is still hope for these women. They need our help.

Saudi Arabia will still be their own country. In no way is this paper trying to force a pushed society on the people in the country. The goal is to help individuals be able to live happy and healthy lives. Not all male guardians may be bad or harmful but the hard truth is that there are some bad people. There are people in very harmful situations who are unable to get help because of the current state of the country. That does not mean Saudi Arabia will always be a harmful place for women, they have clearly shown an increase in helping women's rights in the past. Continuing working to give women's rights back is vital, always.

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