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Joint Statement

Placing human rights violations in Saudi Arabia at the centre of all G20 discussions

We are very concerned about continuing, serious and systematic human rights violations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which currently holds the presidency of the G20 states and is hosting this year's virtual G20 summit on 21 and 22 November.

The human rights situation has deteriorated significantly since the accession of Mohammed bin Salman to power, and the country has witnessed an unprecedented crackdown against all forms of dissent. In the absolute monarchy of Saudi Arabia, human rights are often only granted if they comply with the Wahhabi interpretation of the Sharia. The gruesome murder of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul in October 2018 is only the tip of the iceberg. International human rights organizations are condemning the severe restrictions on the freedom of opinion, peaceful association and assembly as well as on the rights of women, children and stateless individuals; the systematic practice of arbitrary detention of human rights defenders, journalists and opposition activists; the widespread practice of torture, public executions and the use of draconian corporal punishments.

The guardianship system, which severely restricts the freedom and independence of women, and the continued imprisonment of several women's rights activists, including the prominent activist Loujain al-Hathloul for her work on women's rights, casts serious doubts on the credibility of the country's reform and modernization process. Against this background, we call upon the Federal Government,

- to place human rights concerns at the centre of all G20 discussions in order to take a clear stance against the continuing human rights violations and arbitrary arrests in line with the principles of a value-based foreign policy,
- to prioritise human rights concerns in the bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia, and to demand verifiable improvements from the Saudi Arabian government with regard to the guarantees of international human rights standards and their implementation,
- and to advocate for the immediate release of all illegally and arbitrarily detained human rights defenders and women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia.