

**Human Rights Council 42<sup>nd</sup> session**

**General Debate Item 8 Statement – 23 September 2019**

**Co-sponsored by:** IVICUS, Lawyers Watch Canada, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Nazra for Feminist Studies, CELS, FIDH, Human Rights Watch

*Speaker: Lina Al-Hathloul*

*Italics not be read*

Thank you Mr. President,

My name is Lina. I am the sister of Loujain al-Hathloul, who has been detained in a Saudi prison since May 2018, despite calls from the Council and UN experts for her immediate release.

Loujain was imprisoned for promoting the implementation of the Vienna Declaration, which affirms the full and equal enjoyment by women of all human rights.

Loujain did not get to drive in her hometown of Riyadh because she was arrested right before the Saudi government lifted the driving ban for women.

Loujain did not get to travel without needing to get permission from her male guardian: a right she has fought for, not for herself, but for others.

Months before Loujain was arrested, she participated in the CEDAW review of Saudi Arabia. She was eager to engage with the government to improve the lives of her fellow women citizens.

Yet, instead of considering her as a partner, they labelled her a traitor, tortured her and attempted to trade her freedom in exchange for her publically denying the torture.

Mr. President,

I'm here today, despite the high risk of reprisals to Loujain, our family and myself, to call on all States and this Council to demand that the Saudi government immediately and unconditionally release my sister. I also ask your help in holding those who tortured her accountable, including Saud Alqahtani, the former senior advisor to the Royal Court.

Thank you Mr. President.