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OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

SPECIAL PROCEDURES OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

REFERENCE: UA Health (2002-7) G/SO 214 (89-15)
SAU 3/2014

14 May 2014

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 24/6 and 23/25.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning allegations of **ill-treatment, neglect, inadequate medical care and restriction of movement of princesses Sahar (1971), Maha (1972), Hala (1974), and Jawaher (1976), daughters of His Royal Highness King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and his former wife, Ms. Alanoud Al Fayeze.**

According to information received:

Ms. Alanoud Al Fayeze was 15 years old when she was married to Prince Abdullah. The couple had four daughters: princesses Sahar, Maha, Hala and Jawaher, before divorcing in 1984. It is reported that Ms. Al Fayeze lived in Saudi Arabia until 2003. While Ms. Al Fayeze was reportedly able to leave the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, her daughters have remained there. It is also reported that the princesses are under the "responsibility/guardianship" of Prince Abdulaziz, an older son of King Abdallah. The four princesses are currently allegedly confined to royal compounds in Jeddah and are allegedly the victims of ill-treatment, abuse and neglect at the hands of three of their half- brothers from their father's side: princes Abdulaziz, Khaled, and Mitab. Their father is allegedly aware of the situation and in his last meeting with three of his daughters in Jeddah about two years ago, he allegedly told them that until their mother returns to Saudi Arabia, the situation would not change.

Princesses Sahar and Jawaher are reportedly held in the same location whereas princesses Hala and Maha are held separately at unknown locations. The four sisters have not been together or communicated directly for years. Ms. Al Fayeze is also unable to speak freely with princesses Maha and Hala. For the past 13 years the princesses have allegedly been deprived of their rights, to shop for their food or order their food, to move freely within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and abroad, to complete their education and to exercise a profession; and of their rights to marry and build a family. It is further reported that the four princesses are not given the choice of medical care and suspect that medical staff have been giving them treatment without informed consent. One of them who has chronic asthma cannot obtain her medication. It is further alleged that the princesses are under permanent surveillance in locked housing guarded by men belonging to the National Guard that their father used to command before assuming the duties as King. The health of princess Hala, who suffers from severe anorexia and psychiatric disorders, has steadily deteriorated and she is reportedly denied appropriate medical attention by doctors of her choice.

Ms. Al Fayeze, the princesses' mother, who currently lives in the United Kingdom, has not been able to maintain any physical contact with her four daughters. It is alleged that after the issue was publically raised in the media in March 2014, at least two of the four princesses are now unable to obtain food of their choice and are thus left to depend on a rapidly dwindling stock of food and without access to potable water.

We express grave concern at the allegations of ill-treatment, abuse and neglect of the aforementioned women, including confinement to compounds and restriction of freedom of movement for prolonged periods, denial of access to educational and employment opportunities and adequate health care. While acknowledging that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adopted the "Protection from Abuse" law in August 2013, concern is also expressed that the law does not appropriately address the problem of male guardianship of family members, including female relatives, and in many cases, victims would require logistical support or transportation from the same male relatives who allegedly perpetrate abuse against them in order to file a complaint or escape the abusive environment.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, the above alleged facts could indicate a prima facie violation of article 13(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which guarantees freedom of movement, including the right of persons to choose their residence and leave a country; and article 25 which refers to the rights to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-beings of individuals and their family, including food and medical care. In addition these allegations appear to be in contravention with international human rights standards particularly to article 4 (c) and (d) of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women which calls on States to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance

with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons.

The full texts of the human rights instruments and standards recalled above are available on www.ohchr.org or can be provided upon request.

Since it is our responsibility under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Are the facts described in the above case accurate?
2. Please provide information on the guardianship of the above-mentioned individuals by their half-brothers.

We stand ready to continue the dialogue on this case with your Excellency's Government.

Your Excellency's Government's response will be made available in a report to be presented to the Human Rights Council for its consideration.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person responsible for the alleged violations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Anand Grover
Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest
attainable standard of physical and mental health

Rashida Manjoo
Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences