

Statement on egregious use of death penalty in Saudi Arabia in ways that contravene international law

10 October 2026 - World Day Against the Death Penalty

We, the undersigned Parliamentarians, express our deep concern at the disturbing extent to which Saudi Arabia executes both citizens and foreign nationals in ways that violate international human rights law and run counter to the global trend towards abolition.

Saudi Arabia has for years ranked among countries carrying out the highest number of executions worldwide. Despite pledges to restrict use of the death penalty, executions have continued at an alarming rate, reaching record levels of 345 in 2024 and 356 in 2025, and already surpassing 150 in 2026. More than 2,000 executions have taken place since King Salman acceded to the throne in January 2015; in the absence of transparency the true figures may be higher.

We are particularly concerned by continuing use of the death penalty for vaguely defined “terrorism”-related offences that may encompass peaceful dissent; its use against child offenders; and its escalating use for non-lethal drug offences. All such cases violate international human rights law, which limits application of the death penalty to the “most serious” crimes, involving intentional killing.

The increase in executions for drug-related offences has been especially stark. Following an unofficial moratorium between January 2021 and November 2022, they rose from just two reported cases in 2023 to 122 in 2024 and 240 in 2025, more than two-thirds of all executions carried out that year. The vast majority of those affected are nationals of Asian and African countries. Human rights organisations have documented serious due process concerns in these cases, including inadequate access to consular assistance, legal representation, interpretation and court documents, and raised concerns that some may have been victims of human trafficking.

We are also concerned about use of the death penalty in cases brought under Saudi Arabia’s broad and vague “terrorism” legislation. Some have involved conduct apparently amounting to no more than peaceful dissent, as in the case of journalist Turki al-Jasser, executed in June 2025. The disproportionate number of such cases in Saudi Arabia’s predominantly Shia Eastern Province suggests discriminatory application.

Another major concern is the execution of people convicted of offences allegedly committed when they were under 18, which is prohibited by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Saudi Arabia is a party. The execution of three child offenders, Jalal Labbad, Abdullah al-Derazi and Ali al-Subaiti, since August 2025 belies earlier assurances that the death penalty would no longer be applied to juveniles. All three were convicted on terrorism-related charges connected to protests involving Saudi Arabia’s marginalised Shia community, and serious concerns were raised about the fairness of their trials, including allegations of torture and coerced confessions. There are now grave concerns for at least four other child offenders – Youssef al-Manasef, Ali al-Mabiyuq, Jawad Qureiris and Hassan al-Faraj – whose death sentences have reportedly been upheld on appeal. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [found](#) their detention and sentences arbitrary and has urged their release (Opinion No. 71/2024).

Meanwhile, families are frequently denied the opportunity to say goodbye to their loved ones and may learn of an execution only through the media. They may also be denied the right to mourn in accordance with their religious practices through a failure to return bodies or disclose burial locations.

In light of these concerns, we urge the Saudi authorities to establish an immediate moratorium on use of the death penalty with the aim of working towards its abolition, and in the meantime limit application of the death penalty to only the most serious of crimes, and prohibit the execution of minors.

Signatories

- Lord John Alderdice
- Baroness Joan Bakewell DBE
- Lord Guy Black of Brentwood
- Mary Creagh MP
- Anneliese Dodds MP
- Rosie Duffield MP
- Baroness Lynne Featherstone
- Tom Gordon MP
- Lord Neil Kinnock
- Baroness Ruth Lister of Burtersett
- Seamus Logan MP
- Rachael Maskell MP
- Lord Thomas McNally
- Brendan O'Hara MP
- Lord Christopher Rennard MBE
- Zarah Sultana MP
- Lord Graham Tope