

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 11 February 2021

Contact: FreeLoujain@gmail.com

[Press Conference Recording](#)

Loujain AlHathloul Released from Prison - Family Calls for Renewed Fight for Unconditional Freedom and Justice

The family of Loujain asks the international community to continue calling on Saudi Arabia to unconditionally release other human rights defenders

WORLD | 11 Feb 2021 -- Today the family of Loujain AlHathloul hosted a [press briefing](#) to discuss Loujain's release from a Saudi Arabian prison on Wednesday 10 Feb 2021. Loujain, a Saudi citizen and women's rights activist was imprisoned for 1001 days after being sentenced on 28 Dec 2020 under terrorism laws for her work campaigning for the right to drive. Loujain is now under a five-year travel ban and cannot leave Saudi Arabia. She also faces a three-year probationary period that would prevent her from speaking out on her imprisonment and continuing her advocacy work for equal rights for women. Loujain has also been sentenced and labeled a terrorist in Saudi Arabia.

At today's press conference, Loujain's younger sister Lina AlHathloul discussed her sister's appeal status, "Loujain filed two appeals - one for torture and one for the sentence. The appeal for torture was [denied](#) and the judge said that the burden of proof is on Loujain even though Loujain has been fighting for justice since Dec 2018. We also name Saud Al-Qahtani as someone who needs to be held accountable because Loujain recognised him as one of her torturers. For the second appeal on Loujain's sentence, we do not have any further news.

Loujain was released from prison after 1001 days. Alia AlHathloul, Loujain's older sister described the moment she spoke to Loujain for the first time since her release: "Yesterday at 6:00 PM at Brussels time, I got a video call from my mom who was dancing and chanting in joy and making a celebratory noise that many Saudis make when we are happy. I will never, ever forget seeing my sister's face. Loujain was calm, strong, and happy to talk to everyone. She asked me how I was! And she told me that the first thing she did when she

left prison was going to the supermarket to buy ice cream as she hadn't had it in three years."

Loujain AlHatoul's release from prison after 1001 days marks a milestone in the fight for Saudi women's rights activists. The reforms that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has so publicly touted have come at the cost of the very activists who have fought for those reforms. When asked about the future of other human rights defenders inside Saudi Arabia under Mohammed bin Salman, Lina responded, "Inside of the country, nothing has changed. People are still as oppressed as ever -- and even more now. Saudi is more of a police state today than it ever was in the past. State security often breaks into people's homes and disappears people for years. There really is an atmosphere of fear under MBS -- he is far from being a reformer and he's oppressing the Saudi people."

The Free Loujain campaign recognises Loujain's release as a milestone, however in the press conference today the family noted that Loujain's release does not equal freedom. As Loujain is still awaiting the results of the second appeal, as she still is on probation and a travel ban, the family has committed to fighting until Loujain is unconditionally free.

The Free Loujain campaign demands include:

- Bring those who tortured Loujain to justice, including Saud Al-Qahtani
- Drop all charges against Loujain
- Lift the travel ban on Loujain and the entire family
- Reparations to Loujain for illegal imprisonment and kidnapping
- Hold local newspapers and Saudi media accountable for defamation

The full timeline of the Specialised Criminal Court Timeline is noted below.

Specialised Criminal Court Timeline:

- **24 Nov 2020** - Saudi officials notified the family that Loujain's trial would commence tomorrow (25 Nov 2020). Loujain's parents are her legal representatives for the case, they had one day to prepare for the trial.
- **25 Nov 2020** - Loujain's case was transferred to the specialised terrorism court and the court has said it will open an investigation with the prosecution regarding torture. Loujain gave more information regarding her hunger strike (see below)

- **9 Dec 2020** - Saudi officials notified the family in the evening (with less than 24 hours notice) that Loujain's first trial session at the Specialised Criminal Court would be held the following day 10 Dec
- **1st Trial Session** - 10 Dec 2020 - The prosecution called for a maximum sentence for Loujain and changed the charges without permission or notification. All charges and changes can be seen here:
<https://www.loujainalhathloul.org/arrest-torture-charges#trial>
- **2nd Trial Session** - 14 Dec 2020 - Loujain appeared for her second trial appearance at the Specialised Criminal Court. Loujain handed in her defense and was given the evidence against her by the prosecution which include:
 - Tweets about her involvement in the #Women2Drive campaign
 - Contacting Amnesty International to speak about the situation of activists in Saudi Arabia
 - Audio recordings of Loujain speaking about the male guardianship system.
- **3rd Trial Session** - 16 December 2020 - the judge said that he will compare Loujain's defense and the prosecutor's response. This is the first time the judge says this comparison will be done.
- **Criminal Court Hearing** - 17 Dec 2020 - During today's hearing, Loujain and her father were briefed on a secret report on the torture of Loujain. In their summary the Public Prosecution denied the torture charges brought by Loujain, and said that prison cameras do not store photos for more than 40 days.
- **4th Trial Session @ SCC** - 21 Dec 2020 - During the hearing that day, no verdict was given. The judge at the SCC said he is waiting for the final report on torture that has to be sent by the normal criminal court. A new hearing was scheduled at the SCC on 24 Dec 2020. A new hearing regarding the torture was scheduled at the normal criminal court on 22 Dec 2020.
- **Criminal Court Hearing** - 22 Dec 2020 - During Loujain's hearing at the criminal court today, the judge gave her a secret report concluding the "investigation" regarding her torture. He asked her to give her response to the report on the same day. He then sent his final report (in which he denies torture) to the SCC.
- **5th Trial Session** - 23 Dec 2020 - The SCC judge delayed the next hearing until Monday 28 Dec 2020 and notified Loujain and her family in court.
- **6th Trial Session** - 28 Dec 2020 - Loujain AlHathloul a leading Saudi women's rights activist was sentenced to 5 years and 8 months in prison in court today by the Specialised Criminal Court (terrorism court). The sentence includes a suspension of

2 years and 10 months in addition to the time already served (since May 2018) which would see Loujain's release in approximately two months. Loujain is also required to serve three years of probation during which time she could be arrested for any perceived illegal activity. She will also be placed on a 5-year travel ban.

- **9 Feb 2021** - Loujain's parents were called to the criminal court for a hearing regarding the torture investigation appeal. Loujain and her parents received the decision of the court of appeals regarding Loujain's appeal to the criminal court on her torture in the secret prison. For more information, check our [Investigation Of The Torture Page](#)
- **10 Feb 2021** - After 1001 days in prison, [Loujain AlHathloul was released from prison](#). The family held a press briefing on 11 Feb 2021 which can be viewed [here](#).

ABOUT: We are family and supporters of Loujain AlHathloul whose mission is to fight for Loujain's freedom.

WEBSITE: <http://loujainalhathloul.org/>

MEDIA CONTACT: For media requests please contact FreeLoujain@gmail.com