



Finally Saudi women can travel solo – but progress is still fragile

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This article assesses women's progress in Saudi Arabia since the lifting of the driving ban in 2018, and reports on the official decision to grant women passports to travel abroad without a male guardian's consent. This is a step towards reversing the deprivation of women's legal, political and human rights unique to Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi version of Islam as interpreted by conservative clerics. But women still cannot marry, or leave domestic violence shelters or prison without a male relative's consent. Moreover, Al Rasheed notes, prominent feminist activists had been imprisoned. However, Saudi feminists are still discreetly and effectively engaging within civil society to help women.

See also 'Women in Saudi Arabia: Changing the Guard', *Economist*, 20 July 2019, p.42.

Reports official plans to lift some restrictions on women, but also notes fears that a right to travel would increase the number of women fleeing abroad and seeking asylum. The article contextualises possible reforms to free women in the conflicting politics of liberalisation and repression being practised by the Crown Prince.

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