

MANAHEL AL-OTAIBI, Saudi Arabia

In recent years, Saudi Arabia's authorities have claimed they are advancing women's rights in the Kingdom.

Thirty-year-old Manahel al-Otaibi believed these promises and felt freer to express her views and wear what she liked. Now, facing over a decade behind bars, these promises are utterly hollow.

Before her arrest, Manahel was a fitness instructor and a brave and outspoken advocate for women's rights, using social media to call for greater freedoms for women in her country. Manahel was arrested on

16 November 2022, and charged with violating the Anti-Cyber Crime Law due to her tweets supporting women's rights and posting to Snapchat photos of herself at a shopping mall, not wearing an abaya, a traditional loose-fitting long-sleeved robe.

Her case was referred to the country's counter-terrorism court, the Specialized Criminal Court, notorious for its grossly unfair trials and harsh

sentences. On 9 January 2024, Manahel was given an 11-year prison sentence for "terrorist offences" for her online expression, in a secret hearing the results of which were only revealed weeks later.

In November 2023, Manahel told her family she had been beaten by a fellow prisoner, and as a result she was cut off from the outside world, unable to communicate with anyone. In April 2024, Manahel was able to call her family for the first time in months, and sounding distressed, told them she was being held in solitary confinement and had again been brutally beaten, leaving her with a broken leg and no medical treatment.

SHOW MANAHEL SHE IS NOT ALONE

Send your messages of support in a card or letter to Manahel and her family; let them know you care.

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