

ACAT (Harrow group) – prayer case of the month *(July 2020)*

Please pray as you feel led for **Loujain al-Hathloul**, one of the most prominent and outspoken women human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia where she has been detained for over two years.



Loujain al-Hathloul rose to international prominence with a high-profile campaign to win the right for women in Saudi Arabia to be able to drive – a right that was finally granted in June 2018. This was marked with fanfare by the Saudi authorities who sought to present it as evidence of ongoing “reform”.

Loujain al-Hathloul was first detained for 73 days in 2014 after she attempted to drive into Saudi Arabia from the United Arab Emirates. She went on to stand for election in Saudi Arabia in November 2015 – the first time women were allowed to both vote and stand in elections in the state. However, despite finally being recognized as a candidate, her name was never added to the ballot.

Saudi officials detained **Loujain al-Hathloul** again in May 2018, along with a number of other women activists. For the first 10 months of her detention, she was held without charges or trial. She was held incommunicado with no access to her family or lawyer during the first three months of her detention. During that time, she was beaten, water boarded, given electric shocks, sexually harassed, and threatened with rape and murder. On her first trial session on March 13, 2019, **Loujain** was charged with promoting women’s rights; calling for the end of the male guardianship system; and contacting international organizations, foreign media, and other activists, including contact with Amnesty International. Diplomats and journalists have been consistently banned from attending the court sessions.

As of May 2020 her trial has been indefinitely postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic, which has raised concerns over her health inside the Saudi prison. In June her sister Lina called on the UK Government to use its “power and influence” to help secure **Loujain’s** release.

Update: some good news! BAHRAIN: **Nabeel Rajab** (our prayer case for May 2018) has been released on a non-custodial sentence.