Forgotten Amid the Cheering

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A Canadian manufacturer’s multibillion-dollar military vehicle deal with Saudi Arabia cries out for human rights considerations in such sales

By locking up prominent human rights activists like al-Qahtani, Saudi Arabia is brusquely foisting on international obligations and displaying a flagrant disregard for rights to freedom of expression and association.

Further, under the discriminatory Saudi guardianship system, women and girls are forbidden from driving and permitted from travelling, conducting official business or undergoing certain medical procedures without permission from their male guardians. Women are required by law to obtain the permission of a male guardian before getting married, undertaking full-time employment or enrolling in higher education. Such discriminatory rules mean that millions of women continue to be trapped in violent and abusive relationships or prevented from pursuing an education and career that would free them from the base of this association’s patriarchal system.

By refusing to enact a 2011 draft law to combat violence against women, the government failed to impose strict sex segregation in the workplace, mandating that Saudi women be trapped in violent and abusive relationships or prevented from pursuing an education and career that would free them from the base of this association’s patriarchal system.

According to Amnesty International, Saudi Arabia’s geographical and road regulations that guarantee our military equipment is not used against civilians, a few of whom may rise up in the future — perhaps as part of the ongoing Arab Spring — to oppose one of the most repressive governments in the Middle East. We can see every day on our television screens what undemocratic governments, such as North Korea, Syria, and Russia, can do to their citizens.

More ethical questions need to be asked as Canada’s arms industry moves to crucial in the lead-up to the Sochi Olympic Games.

Canada’s terrible human rights record.

Perhaps the LAVs could be used by Saudi Arabia to be used to somehow trample even more on the rights of the people in the Middle East.

— Erika Simpson is the author of NATO and the Bomb and an associate professor of political science who teaches about international security and global politics at Western University.