

# *Melania Trump Praises 'Empowerment of Women' at Saudi Factory*

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Riyadh, May 22 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump's wife, Melania, has praised Saudi Arabia's "empowerment of women," somehow ignoring the fact that the kingdom is notorious for unfair treatment of women.

Melania, who accompanies her husband on his maiden foreign trip to Saudi Arabia, made the remarks while visiting an all-female General Electric service center in the Saudi capital of Riyadh on Sunday. After her visit, she tweeted: "Enjoyed talking to the incredible women working hard at the service center. Great strides being made towards the empowerment of women."

The First Lady made the remarks notwithstanding the fact that Saudi Arabia has long been known as the world's most gender-segregated nation. Just last year, in 2016, Saudi Arabia was ranked 141 out of 144 on the Global Gender Gap Index.

In recent years, the Al Saud regime has come under intense pressure by rights groups for mistreating women. Saudi women must live under the supervision of a male guardian and cannot travel, study and get a number of health treatments without their permission. They were also banned from voting until

2015, when they were finally allowed to vote in local elections.

Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world that prohibits women from driving. The ban stems from a religious fatwa imposed by Wahhabi clerics. If women get behind the wheel in the kingdom, they may be arrested, sent to court and even flogged.

In January, Philip Alston, a UN Special Rapporteur on human rights, blasted Riyadh's treatment of women, saying the driving ban and the guardianship limitations had to be lifted. Ironically, Saudi Arabia was one of the 13 countries that were elected by the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to the Commission on the Status of Women in late April.

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