



FOUR CORNERS: ESCAPE FROM SAUDI

Monday 4 February 2019

Escape from Saudi: The women who make it and the ones who don't.

"My name is Rahaf Mohammed. I'm 18 years old... They have my passport and tomorrow they will force me to go back...Please help me. They will kill me." Rahaf Al Qunun.

It was a voice of desperation, an urgent SOS to the world. A Saudi teenager, trapped in transit, on the run from her family and the Saudi state, hoping to make it to Australia.

"I planned my escape...I planned it at dawn, paid for my tickets, left in the morning while my family slept and arrived at the airport." Rahaf Al Qunun.

Within hours #saverahaf lit up social media and set off global headlines.

"There was no going back for Rahaf now...I couldn't live with myself if this was a real person and I didn't do what I could to help her." Author.

Four Corners reporter Sophie McNeill flew to Bangkok, slipped past security and joined Rahaf Al Qunun as the young woman barricaded herself inside the room.

"An official...has just knocked on the door and tried to get Rahaf to leave, she's refused... they've tried all sorts of ways of enticing her out of the room." Sophie McNeill, reporter.

On Monday *Four Corners* reveals how the extraordinary events unfolded, using exclusive previously unseen video recorded by both Sophie McNeill and Rahaf herself. The program captures moments of high tension, despair and eventual jubilation when Rahaf is offered asylum in Canada.

Rahaf is one of the lucky ones; not every woman gains her freedom. In this dramatic investigation, *Four Corners* reveals how Australia has become a hotspot for women attempting to escape the oppressive Saudi regime. Not everyone makes it.

"They beat her. They taped her mouth shut. They bound her arms and legs together, and dragged her onto a plane kicking and screaming, and nobody did anything. This is a grown woman." Author.



The program shows the tactics used and the pressure applied to try to stop these young women.

“The Saudi state is active in exerting its diplomatic influence to try to interdict them.” Human rights investigator.

Those lucky enough to make it to Australia say they are still at risk. The investigation has uncovered multiple cases of Saudi women here in Australia, living in fear, telling reporter Sophie McNeill of the attempts to intimidate or trick them into returning them home.

“They are trying to reach the girls and speak to them to convince them to return back to Saudi.” Saudi woman in Australia.

Escape from Saudi, reported by Sophie McNeill and presented by Sarah Ferguson, goes to air on Monday 4th February at 8.30pm. It is replayed on Tuesday 5th February at 1.00pm and Wednesday 6th at 11.20pm. It can also be seen on ABC NEWS channel on Saturday at 8.10pm AEST, [ABC iview](#) and at abc.net.au/4corners.

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