



IF THIS IS HOW YOUR COUNTRY DELIVERS JUSTICE, YOU NEED A REALLY, *REALLY* GOOD PR AGENCY.

What should you do if you are worried about your image? If your country has a terrible reputation when it comes to human rights, but you want to establish trade relations with countries that have criticised you? One option would be to stop mercilessly persecuting minorities, human rights activists, journalists and academics. Or you could end systematic discrimination against women and girls. You might also decide to put an end to unfair trials, torture in prisons, corporal punishment and beheadings.

Or, you could just hire a really, really good PR agency.

A PR agency that can create an impression in the Western media of a country governed by a visionary Crown Prince, pursuing ambitious reforms. A country that even gives women permission to drive cars and visit sports stadiums. A PR agency to pump out positive news stories about the financial and humanitarian aid that you are offering to a country like Yemen.

That way, you can hide the grim facts: that women actually have no control over their lives when it comes to matters such as travel, marriage, divorce and custody of their children. That you are continuing to commit war crimes in Yemen: bombing hospitals, schools and residential areas, killing and injuring civilians, and restricting the import of food and medicine.

That's the choice that Saudi Arabia has made. Yes, they've been working hard. Not at introducing major reforms – but at mounting major public relations campaigns. Targeting Western countries. Targeting us. And as long as we allow ourselves to be misled, human rights will lose out.

Saudi Arabia, don't mistake public relations for human rights.



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