

# From ISIS to Activists: New Security Trials in Saudi Arabia

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Lori Plotkin Boghardt was a senior fellow in Gulf politics at The Washington Institute from 2013-2018.



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In 2008, Saudi Arabia established the Specialized Criminal Court to try al-Qaeda detainees who had been connected to attacks inside the kingdom. Over time, the court's caseload has expanded to include supporters of the Islamic State, Jabhat al-Nusra and other terrorist groups, as well as activists and critics. The court's cases -- and the kingdom's selective openness about them -- offer a window onto Riyadh's security concerns.

In this Research Note, Lori Plotkin Boghardt examines the court's activities and recommends that Washington urge its strategic partner to more widely publicize terrorist convictions while visibly correcting legal practices surrounding the trials. The author also maintains that it is in Washington's interest -- and its responsibility -- to continue to discuss with Riyadh distinguishing critics from terrorist supporters, as well as other critical rights issues.

## THE AUTHOR

Lori Plotkin Boghardt is the Barbara Kay Family Fellow at The Washington Institute, where she specializes in Arab Gulf politics and U.S.-Gulf relations. Prior to joining the Institute, Dr. Boghardt worked for more than ten years as a Middle East analyst for the U.S. intelligence community, including positions at the CIA and at Science Applications International Corporation. Previously a research fellow at The Brookings Institution, an analyst at RAND, and a Soref research fellow at The Washington Institute, she is the author of *Jordan-Israel Peace: Taking Stock, 1994-1997* (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/israel-jordan-peace-taking-stock-1994-1997>) and *Kuwait Amid War, Peace and Revolution: 1979-1991 and New Challenges* ([http://www.amazon.com/Kuwait-Amid-War-Peace-Revolution/dp/1403994056/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1463440747&sr=1-1&keywords=Kuwait+Amid+War%2C+Peace+and+Revolution%3A+1979-1991](http://www.amazon.com/Kuwait-Amid-War-Peace-Revolution/dp/1403994056/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1463440747&sr=1-1&keywords=Kuwait+Amid+War%2C+Peace+and+Revolution%3A+1979-1991)). ❖

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