

Don't contest, Bahraini women warned

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Some women candidates have approached the Supreme Council for Women and filed a complaint after allegedly receiving threatening text messages on their mobile phones stating they "lacked the qualification to run the country and hold parliamentary positions."

Dr Munira Fakhro, contesting on behalf of the Wa'ad society, told the Tribune: "We had to approach SCW after these messages were sent to some of the women candidates. There are some conservative scholars who are against women contesting the elections. This is not fair as it is an attempt to weaken the position of women candidates."

She said: "Women are being targeted to discourage from contesting. Actions like this show how tough it is for a woman to make her mark in this chauvinistic society. There are 18 women candidates who are contesting and most of them are independent. This can affect their psyche and we need to address this issue and punish the culprits."

Dr Munira urged the Ministry of Justice to intervene and investigate the matter. "We have confidence in the SCW which is chaired by Her Highness Shaikha Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa who works for the empowerment of women. The government should take immediate steps to curb this menace. We have no clue who is behind all these messages. We suspect there are rival candidates who are trying to bring in a religious angle."

In the 2002 elections, similar attempts were made threatening women candidates so that they step down. In the first elections, 51 per cent of the voters were women in the first round which increased to 55 per cent in the second round, outnumbering men, and this could be a worrying factor for many. SCW officials when contacted by Tribune, however declined to confirm the allegations.