

**Mom pleads for help in getting girls out of Saudi 06/13/02**

By Sarah Fowler

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WASHINGTON - Pat Roush's voice shook as she spoke Wednesday before a House panel about her efforts to free daughters - taken by their Saudi Arabian father from their home in Ciero to a country where they "are wrapped up, locked up, and shut up."

She testified Wednesday before a House committee as part of a push to free Americans being held against their will in Saudi Arabia.

Alia and Aisha Gheshayan were 7 and 3 and living with Roush when their father, Khalid Al-Gheshayan, abducted them during a weekend visit and took them to Saudi Arabia in 1986. At the time the couple was divorced and Roush had custody of the girls.

Because of Saudi laws requiring women to have permission from their father or husband in order to leave the country, the girls have remained there ever since.

Both Alia, now 23, and Aisha, now 19, have been forced into marriages with Saudi men.

Roush said Aila is expecting her first child, news she learned reading a Saudi newspaper, she told the committee.

For more then 16 years Roush, 56, has fought for her daughters return with little help from the State Department, which is reluctant to act in violation of Saudi law.

Committee members expressed outrage and called for a closer examination of the State Department's policies for handling such cases.

"It baffles me that Saudi Arabia refuses to reform its laws on women's rights," said Rep. Schakowsky (D-Ill.).