
22th Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 2 – Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner

Joint Statement on the OHCHR and the human rights situation in Bahrain

Geneva, 28 February 2013

Mr. President,

I have the honour to make this statement on the OHCHR and the human rights situation in Bahrain on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America and Uruguay.

We welcome the visit of an OHCHR delegation for a needs assessment mission to Bahrain from 2 to 6 December 2012 and take note with appreciation of the willingness of the Government of Bahrain to allow the delegation to visit all requested places and institutions and to meet all the persons they wanted. We welcome also the commitment of the Government of Bahrain to the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Mr. Juan Mendez, for him to conduct a visit to Bahrain in May 2013.

We commend the resumption of the National Dialogue on 10 February 2013 and encourage all sides to participate in a constructive way. We encourage the Government of Bahrain to continue to work with all participants in the Dialogue towards an open, democratic and inclusive society with equal possibilities for all.

However, the human rights situation in Bahrain remains an issue of serious concern to us. We are particularly concerned about the continued harassment and imprisonment of persons exercising their rights to freedom of opinion and expression, including of human rights defenders. We are also concerned about guarantees of due process in the trials of 13 political activists who had their

sentences, including life sentences, upheld in January 2013. We urge the Government of Bahrain to uphold the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and to exercise restraint when reacting to public gatherings; we also expect protestors to act peacefully. Furthermore, we are concerned about the decisions by the Government of Bahrain to revoke the nationality of 31 citizens, which left several of them stateless, and to dismiss or imprison medical professionals. Lastly, while we welcome the establishment of the Special Investigations Unit, we are concerned that those alleged to have committed human rights violations are often neither prosecuted nor punished.

We encourage the Government of Bahrain to address these concerns and expedite the implementation of the recommendations received from the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry and the recommendations Bahrain agreed to accept through the Universal Periodic Review. We urge the Government of Bahrain to enhance its cooperation with the OHCHR and allow for a fully comprehensive collaboration. Furthermore, we call upon the Government of Bahrain to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of association and assembly and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and any other Special Procedures that request to visit Bahrain.

Madame High-Commissioner, what were the conclusions of the OHCHR from its visit to Bahrain in December 2012 and what follow-up would you like to see from this visit?

Thank you Mr. President.