
24th Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 2 – General Debate

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

Geneva, 9 September 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, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, the United States of America and Uruguay.

We take note of positive steps taken by the Government of Bahrain to implement the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry in order to improve the human rights situation in Bahrain. In particular, we note with appreciation the creation of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for the Ministry of Interior in August 2012 and its official launch in July 2013. We also note the creation of the Special Investigation Unit in the Public Prosecution Office in February 2012. We urge these institutions to proactively fulfil their mandate and encourage the Government of Bahrain to uphold its commitment to these institutions and their independence.

We commend the continuation of the National Consensus Dialogue in August 2013 and encourage all sides to participate in a constructive and genuine 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 opportunities for all.

However, the human rights situation in Bahrain remains an issue of serious concern to us. In particular, we share the concerns expressed by the OHCHR regarding the 22 recommendations made by the National Assembly of Bahrain on 28 July 2013. Any new legislation to implement these recommendations must meet international standards and ensure human rights are protected. We are also particularly concerned by the ongoing violation of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and the repression of demonstrations. We expect officials and protestors to refrain from any violence. Furthermore, we continue to be 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 the cases of revocation of nationality without due process, some of which might lead to statelessness. Lastly, we are concerned that those alleged to have committed human rights violations are often not held accountable.

We call upon 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, including accepting an OHCHR follow-up mission. We also urge the Government of Bahrain to cooperate with the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, in particular the Special Rapporteur on torture, the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, together with any other Special Procedures that request to visit Bahrain and reschedule previously planned visits. Lastly, we encourage the Government of Bahrain to fulfil its obligation to submit its outstanding reports to the treaty bodies of the human rights conventions it has ratified.

We will continue to follow closely the human rights situation in Bahrain and invite the OHCHR, Special Procedures and the Human Rights Council to do so. We also invite the Government of Bahrain to further engage with the Human Rights Council.

Thank you Mr. President.