



Mr. President,

Alsalam Foundation, together with Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, would like to call the Council's attention certain areas of technical deficiencies in the human rights mechanisms in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Both the Office of the Ombudsman for the Ministry of Interior and National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR) require further reform and additional capacity assistance, in order to act as effective, independent, credible and transparent checks against further human rights abuses in Bahrain.

The Office of the Ombudsman was established to critique Interior Ministry practices with "independence, credibility, impartiality, accountability, and transparency." Thus far, the office has been unable to demonstrate any of these qualities. In fact, according to the Ombudsman's own Annual Report of 2013/2014 released last month, the Ombudsman is obligated to

undertake his mission in a manner that would not “adversely affect public confidence in the Ministry of Interior.” These two mandates cannot mutually exist, and thus make it impossible to for the Ombudsman's Office to independently monitor the human rights practices of the Ministry of Interior.

We also note with great concern that, while the NIHR has a largely sound legal framework, this mandate has not been carried out independently, objectively or effectively by that office. This was best exemplified in July 2013 when the NIHR publicly praised the enactment of 22 recommendations broadening Bahrain’s terrorism laws, which severely restricted free assembly and expression in Bahrain.

While we are grateful for the committed work that OHCHR carried out during their recent technical assessment mission to Bahrain, further engagement, assistance, and reform of these institutions is required before they achieve the independence, transparency and credibility that is necessary to effectively carry out their mandates.

Therefore, we call on Bahrain to seek further cooperation with the OHCHR in the area of technical cooperation and capacity building, in order to reform these two institutions to insure that each office and their staffs are able to properly carry out their mandates. We further call on the Bahraini

NHRI to seek OHCHR accreditation, in order to demonstrate its effective independence. Thank you.