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BAHRAIN INSTITUTE FOR
RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY



Madame Vice-President,

Alsalam Foundation, together with Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, would like call to the Council's attention the Bahraini government's continued lack of implementation of key elements of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. While Bahrain's failure to implement the provisions of the Declaration are not limited the areas enumerated in our statement, we would specifically like to draw attention to the government's failure to implement Article II B, Section 1, Paragraph 22, which calls upon all governments to "[recognize] that every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, expression, and religion."

The Government of Bahrain continues to target, arrest and abuse journalists and members of the press in Bahrain on charges related to their work and their free expression. Emblematic is the case of Husain Hubail, an award-winning freelance photographer whose work has been published

by *Agence France-Presse* and *Voice of America*. Mr. Hubail was convicted in April of this year on charges including: calling for illegal gatherings, inciting hatred against the government, and the misuse of social media. At his trial, he reported that he had been tortured and denied medical treatment. Mr. Hubail's appeal against his 5-year sentence was set for this past Sunday, but has now been postponed until 20 August.

Bloggers and online activists have also faced arbitrary detention and torture, including Abduljalil Singace and Mohammed Hassan. Furthermore, recent expansions to Bahrain's terrorism laws and sentencing guidelines mean that crimes such as insulting the king, prime minister, or government, can now carry prison sentences of up to seven years. Bahrain's laws limiting speech further extend to social media, where an offending tweet can likewise carry a prison sentence of years.

The continued detention of these and other prisoners of conscience stands in direct contrast to the aims and objectives of the Vienna Declaration. We therefore call on Bahrain to immediately and unconditionally release all persons currently held under charges related to their free and peaceful expression or assembly.

Thank you.