

Mr. President,

Alsalam Foundation, together with Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), would like to call the Council's attention to the status of human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience in Bahrain.

Three months ago, I completed a two-year arbitrary prison sentence in Bahrain. I am deeply grateful to all those who called for my release throughout my sentence. The dedication of all those to who worked on behalf of myself and other imprisoned Bahraini human rights defenders continues move me months after my release.

However, though I am free, other human rights defenders like Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, Maryam al-Khawaja, Abduljalil Singace, and Naji Fateel, as well as many others, remain in Bahraini detention. These counts of reprisals against human rights defenders make up only a portion of the nearly 4,000 political prisoners held under charges largely related to free expression or assembly.

With this experience in mind, we reiterate the call of 47 Member States, that Bahrain "release all persons imprisoned solely for exercising human rights, including human rights defenders, some of whom have been identified as arbitrarily detained..."

We also call on the Office of the High Commissioner to continue to critically engage Bahrain regarding the ongoing arbitrary detention of the thousands of political prisoners in Bahrain. We believe that OHCHR can play a constructive role in facilitating the release of these prisoners, and an easing of the country's expansive terrorism laws restricting free assembly and expression. Such steps by both OHCHR and the government would be a welcome beginning to the renewed process of necessary reform.

Thank you.