

Mr. President,

Alsalam Foundation, along with Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, would like to call the Council's attention to the renewed targeting of human rights defenders and political opposition figures in Bahrain.

Within 24 hours of his return from an advocacy tour including the 27th Session of the Human Rights Council, the Bahraini government arrested Nabeel Rajab, nominally in relation to an offending tweet. Nabeel was convicted and sentenced to six months in prison on 20 January. In two days, Nabeel will face his final appeals trial in relation to these charges.

In late December 2014, the government summoned Sheikh Ali Salman, Secretary General of al-Wefaq Society—the largest political opposition group in Bahrain—for questioning. Two days before his summons, Sheikh Ali was re-elected as Secretary-General despite government orders to dissolve the organization following their boycott of the November elections. The Ministry of Interior interrogated Sheikh Ali regarding speeches that he had given dating back to 2012 in which he called for peaceful protests, as well as political and electoral reforms. Sheikh Ali awaits trial on the 25th of this month on a litany of charges including “attempting to overthrow the government.”

The Government of Bahrain has repeatedly postponed the trials of both Nabeel Rajab and Sheikh Ali Salman, drawing criticism from international NGOs that Bahrain is attempting to escape accountability from the Human Rights Council. We therefore call on the Council to recognize the arbitrary nature of their prosecutions and ask the Bahraini government to release Nabeel Rajab, Sheikh Ali Salman, and all Bahraini prisoners held under politically motivated charges.