

Mr. President,

With consideration to Section II C of the Vienna Declaration, Alsalam Foundation, together with Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, would like to raise our concern for States' lack of support for pluralistic civil society, the promotion of free expression, and the administration of justice. We are deeply concerned that the targeting of human rights defenders, civil society, and voices of dissent by States only serve to undermine the implementation of this Declaration and Program of Action.

For example, in Bahrain, the government arrested the country's most prominent human rights defender, Nabeel Rajab, less than 24 hours after his return from raising Bahraini human rights abuses at the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council and with the European Union. His arrest was in relation to a tweet that was deemed offensive by both the ministries of interior and defense. While this charge illustrates expansive restrictions to free expression, Mr. Rajab's detention immediately following his advocacy as a human rights defender also demonstrates further constrictions on civil society space in Bahrain. Mr. Rajab was sentenced to 6 months in prison on these charges and awaits his final appeal on 15 April.

Beyond the recent case against Nabeel Rajab, the government of Bahrain still maintains arbitrary prison sentences against the 13 most prominent human rights defenders, activists, religious and opposition figures involved in the peaceful protest movement of February-March 2011. These non-violent prisoners of conscience have become known as the "Bahrain 13," including Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, Abduljalil Singace, Hasan Mushaima, Abdulwahab Hussain, and Sheikh Mohamed Habib al-Miqdad among others. Many of these figures have faced torture and ill-treatment, for which they continue to be denied adequate medical care.

Examples such as these illustrate a continuing disregard by certain States for the principles and objectives adopted in the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action. We therefore call on these States to take immediate and effective steps towards realizing the objects of this Declaration, particularly concerning protections for free expression, and support for pluralistic civil society.

Thank you.