

Mr. President,

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain would like to call the Council's attention to persistent and systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law during the ongoing Saudi intervention in current Yemen conflict.

Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen has deepened what has already been described as a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. Since the operation began in March 2015, an estimated 2,600 people have been killed, and the percentage of Yemen's population needing emergency aid has risen from 60% to over 80%. According to UNICEF, more than four times as many children have been killed in the last 10 weeks of the conflict than in all of last year.

Throughout its air campaign, the Saudi military has demonstrated a disregard for both the lives of Yemeni civilians and the survival of the Yemeni state. Airstrikes have hit refugee camps, residences, schools, hospitals, and aid sites. They have targeted critical infrastructure like airports, harbors, and electrical facilities. The indiscriminate bombing of urban areas has decimated Yemen's cities, including UNESCO heritage sites. According to Human Rights Watch, Saudi forces have purposefully targeted an Oxfam warehouse, and even deployed illegal cluster munitions. Many of these actions have been carried out in contravention of international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes.

The Saudi government displays a similar disregard for the lives of political activists, human rights defenders, and minority religious leaders within its own territory. Raif Badawi, Waleed Abu Al-Khair, Mohammed al-Qahtani – Saudi authorities prosecute those who wish to exercise basic human freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. In the case of someone like Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, who we fear to be in imminent danger of execution, the enjoyment of these freedoms is punishable by death.

We urge the Council to call on States to respect the universal human rights of all people, both in conflict and at home. We also call on Saudi Arabia to respect international human rights and humanitarian law in both internal and external actions.

Thank you.