

Mr. President,

Emphasizing the importance of the UPR process in the advancement of human rights in the Gulf Region, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain welcomes this opportunity to address the Council in the run up to the UPR consideration of Oman. Recalling over 100 recommendations accepted by Oman during its first cycle UPR review, we are concerned with the lacking implementation of these recommendations four years on.

We are particularly alarmed at the systematic repression of peaceful assembly and crackdown on freedom of expression in the Sultanate since 2011. We remain concerned that Oman has failed to lift legal restrictions on freedom of assembly, with sentences on *'unapproved public gatherings'*, carrying up to three years in prison by law - a law which is further subjected to arbitrary application in practice. Last year, an appeal court's decision to uphold a four year sentence against Dr. Talib Al-Maamari, charged for protests against environmental degradation, exemplifies a wider pattern of arrests and sentencing of peaceful protesters, a growing trend in Oman since 2011. Similarly, the recent sentencing of prominent human rights defender Said Jidad to three years imprisonment for *'undermining the prestige of the state'* is reflective of the increased restrictions on freedom of expression and the work of human rights defenders in the country.

Recently, we have also been concerned with the Ministry of Interior's restrictions on the public political participation of over 170 parliamentary candidates, who were blacklisted for unspecified accusations of *'immoral conduct'*. This includes many individuals involved in leading or participating in peaceful public protests in 2011 and 2012.

Mr. President,

The UPR is only as effective as a state's acceptance and implementation of this Council's recommendations. We therefore call on Oman to take serious steps towards withdrawing restrictions on freedom of assembly, expression and public political participation in line with recommendations made by states during its first UPR cycle. We further call on Oman to specifically ensure the protections of these rights through the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Thank you.