



Mr. President,

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain would like to raise our deep concern over the Saudi criminal justice system, which continues to perpetuate torture and degrading treatment, violate due process rights, and imprison peaceful civil society activists.

Saudi law enforcement agents frequently torture suspects in order to coerce confessions. In February 2012, Saudi authorities arrested 17-year-old Ali Mohammed al-Nimr on suspicion of participating in Eastern Province protests. They allegedly subjected him to extreme forms of torture, including beatings that resulted in a broken nose, broken teeth, and that caused him to urinate blood. This treatment continued until al-Nimr confessed to crimes serious enough to warrant the death penalty. He is currently in imminent danger of execution.

In general, the Saudi criminal justice system shields torturers. The Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution, charged with investigating the wrongdoing of law enforcement officials, also oversees processes of interrogation, creating a clear conflict of interest. Furthermore, Saudi authorities regularly prevent attorneys and other third parties from accessing places of interrogation, leaving no independent witnesses for acts of torture.

The criminal justice system has punished civil society activists who draw attention to cases of torture. Mohammed al-Qahtani, a leader of the Saudi Arabian Civil and Political Rights Association, is serving a 10-year prison term for, among other acts, helping to document torture and other human rights violations. Authorities sentenced Waleed Abu al-Khair, a human rights lawyer who attempted to reform the criminal justice system, to 15-years in prison for his activism. His wife, Samar Badawi, has received a travel ban for her public documentation of Saudi human rights abuses. Officials issued this ban after her participation at the 27th Session of the Human Rights Council, a clear act of Reprisal.

We therefore call on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as a Member of the Human Rights Council, to legally define acts of torture and enforce current legislation criminalizing acts of torture domestically. We further call on Saudi Arabia to guard against reprisals, including torture, against civil society activists.

Thank you.