



Mr. President,

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, together with the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, would like to express our gratitude for the continuing efforts of the UN Special Procedures to promote human rights globally. We would like to draw your attention to Gulf Cooperation Council countries' recent engagement with the special procedures.

After a 2014 visit to Qatar, the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers expressed particular concern about migrant workers' access to justice. The majority of migrant workers in Qatar do not know how or where to file a complaint. Even when their cases go to court, migrant workers often cannot pay the necessary court fees, especially since many complaints relate to non-payment of salaries. The Special Rapporteur welcomed government statements promising to reform and replace the *kafala* system. We call on Qatar to implement the promised reforms and ensure equal access to justice.

Similar abuses stemming from the *kafala* system occur in Saudi Arabia. These abuses come in the form of employers revoking workers' passports, requiring laborers to work excessive hours, and at times, completely withholding workers' pay. During the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery's upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia, we call on the Government to refrain from carrying out reprisals against those who cooperate with the Special Rapporteur.

The Special Procedures' recent joint communications report lent considerable attention to human rights violations in Bahrain. The Special Procedures advised the Bahraini government to ensure that human rights defender Nabeel Rajab is not arbitrarily deprived of liberty, as well as expressed concerns over the detention of 39 minors, 35 of whom were held in solitary confinement. With the continuing documentation of numerous human rights violations in Bahrain, we call on the Government of Bahrain to allow visits by the Special Rapporteurs and increase its engagement with United Nations mechanisms.

Thank you.