

Mr. President,

In view of the Durban Declaration's commitment to the principles of equality and non-discrimination, Alsalam Foundation, together with Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, would like to raise our concern regarding ongoing policies of discrimination against stateless populations.

For example, in Gulf Cooperation Council countries, stateless populations, known as the Bidoon, face systemic discrimination. They have limited or no access to employment, medical services, and economic opportunities, largely due to the near impossibility of providing valid identification documents. They face mass exclusion from basic state services and live on the margins of society.

We additionally wish to express our concern at recent reports of the arbitrary arrest and torture of bidoon persons in the GCC. On 12 January 2016, Kuwait's Criminal Court convicted 26 defendants on charges of "spying for Iran." Kuwaiti authorities initially arrested the defendants in August 2015 after they seized a cache of arms on a farm in Abdali, near the Kuwait-Iraq border. Among the defendants were a number of bidoon persons.

The court sentenced two men to death, one man to life in prison, and 19 others to between five and 15 years in prison. The defendants denied the charges against them and credibly alleged that they had been tortured into confessing. Authorities reportedly conducted superficial medical

examinations once the acts of torture could no longer be seen on the defendants' bodies.

Mr. President, torture is never justified, and convictions based on coerced confessions should never be accepted. Marginalized populations like the Bidoon deserve the same human rights protections as any other populations. We therefore call on all States to take urgent and effective measures to end statelessness, with an aim to promoting equality and non-discrimination worldwide.

Thank you.