

Mr. President,

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain would like to acknowledge Saudi Arabia's efforts to enhance technical cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner. We call on Saudi Arabia to renew agreements with the Office of the High Commissioner and expand its cooperation with OHCHR in 2017 and beyond.

In June 2012, the Saudi Human Rights Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding on technical cooperation with OHCHR. Though limited details are available on the content of the MOU, OHCHR stated that it would create a framework for developing a three-year plan for capacity building on human rights promotion and protection in Saudi Arabia.

In 2014, OHCHR held a training for government employees on how to interact with UN human rights mechanisms, and in January 2016, OHCHR and the Saudi Human Rights Commission convened a symposium on compliance with the Convention against Torture. Further, since February 2014, OHCHR has organized a series of trainings for members of the Saudi judiciary, though few details are available on the program.

We welcome the steps Saudi Arabia has taken to cooperate with OHCHR, but we believe more needs to be done. Little public information exists on the content or outcome of most of these training programs, and training programs take place sporadically and with selective participation. Civil society participation in technical cooperation programs remains extremely limited, and without the participation of civil society, programs will not produce a broad societal impact.

We therefore call on the Government of Saudi Arabia to expand and deepen its technical cooperation agreement with OHCHR, including by inviting civil society members to participate in initiatives and providing additional details on its long-term plan for human rights promotion and protection.

Thank you.