

Mr. President,

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, together with the Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy, and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, would like to express our deep regret at apparent acts of reprisals committed thus far this session by states attempting to restrict civil society's access to this Council.

Recently, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights held a training seminar in the Kingdom of Bahrain to train local civil society on how to engage with various UN mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council. OHCHR regularly and diligently takes steps to protect civil society participants taking part in training programs conducted or administered by the Office.

Yet yesterday, security officials in Bahrain informed six individuals traveling to take part in this session of the Council that travel bans were implemented against them. These individuals, a number of whom participated in OHCHR's recent training, include human rights defenders Husain Radhi and Ebtisam Alsaegh, a previously arbitrarily detained medic and labor rights activists Ebrahim Demistani, the activist Ali Ghadir and the family members of victims of extrajudicial killings in Bahrain.

Worse still, at dawn this morning, Bahraini security forces surrounded the home of Nabeel Rajab, the President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. Security forces arrested Nabeel, and confiscated all of his electronics. No one has heard from Nabeel since.

This unprecedented crackdown against Bahraini civil society at the start of this Human Rights Council Session clearly runs directly contrary to the principles and commitments involved in the agreement to host an OHCHR training program in Manama to increase civil society capacity for engaging with the United Nations.

We therefore call on this Council to formally condemn Bahrain for these acts of reprisals and call for the immediate release of Nabeel Rajab and all human rights defenders, and lifting all travel bans against human rights activists. We further call on OHCHR to immediately cease all cooperation programs with the Government of Bahrain until the full protection of all civil society participants can be guaranteed.

Thank you.