

Mr. President,

Alsalam Foundation, together with Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, would like to raise our ongoing concern over States' expansive practices to criminalize peaceful expression to target human rights defenders and voices of dissent.

For example, in Bahrain, the President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab, has been repeatedly targeted, detained and sentenced to arbitrary prison terms in relations to comments made via social media.

In mid-2014, Nabeel completing a two-year sentence in relation to tweets. Over the next two years, the government twice arrested and charged Nabeel with additional crimes under the cybercrimes law, and served two terms in detention.

Yet Bahrain has not stopped targeting Nabeel for his critical tweets. One week ago today, the government of Bahrain arrested Nabeel again for tweets that they claim "spread false news that undermines the prestige of the State." Today he remains in solitary confinement in a windowless, squalid cell.

Nabeel's renewed detention also serves as an additional form of intimidation against other human rights defenders, including the seven individuals placed under travel ban last week when attempting to travel here, to the HRC. Meanwhile, the government has moved to suspend Bahrain's largest opposition party based on their free and peaceful expressions of dissent.

In light of cases of intimidation, reprisals and arbitrary detention for free expression like Nabeel's, we call on all states, including Bahrain, to ensure free and peaceful expression without exception, and to release all those detained in relation to free expression, including Nabeel Rajab.

Thank you.