

Mr. President,

On occasion of the 10-year anniversary of the Human Rights Council, Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain is concerned with the legitimacy of this Council when certain Members do not meet even most basic standards of human rights. In this context, we highlight that UN bodies have regularly found Members such as Saudi Arabia, to be in severe violation of the rights that this Council is mandated to protect.

For example, the UN Committee Against Torture recently highlighted its concern that torture and other ill-treatment are commonly practiced in Saudi Arabia. The Committee further expressed its concern with regard to Saudi Arabia's ongoing imposition of corporal punishments, reprisals against Human Rights Defenders, the admissibility of coerced confessions in Saudi courts and increasing execution sentences.

This session the Special Procedures have also reported in several cases that Saudi Arabia has failed to follow due process and has arbitrarily sentenced bloggers and human rights defenders. Saudi Arabia has continually refused to cooperate with the Special Procedures in responding to communications, in particular on the cases of Raif Badawi and Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr.

We are deeply disturbed by these trends, which set a deplorable precedent for what it means to be a member of this Council. We strongly believe that members should serve as examples of good practice and should exhibit a demonstrated commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. These principles were central to the creation of this Council 10 years ago and we feel that they must be reaffirmed. We therefore urge the Council to consider stronger criteria for membership, as well as holding all current and future Members to a higher standard of human rights practice.

Thank you.