



Mr. President,

We are increasingly concerned with threats to medical personnel and their independent work in providing universal medical assistance, as addressed in the VDPA.

For example, in Bahrain, medics and doctors have been under threat since 2011. Dr. Ali al-Ekri just recently completed a five year arbitrary prison sentence for giving medical aid to injured and dying protestors after security forces suppressed Bahrain's 2011 peaceful protest movement. Yet just this year, additional medics and doctors, such as Dr. Taha al-Durazi, have also been sentenced in relation to their work or their free expression.

Additionally, all of Bahrain's public hospitals have been transferred from civilian to military administration, and the nation's ambulance and paramedic services are now under the direct control of the Ministry of Interior. As a result, those injured during protests or as a result of excessive police force are afraid of seeking formal medical care for fear of arrest, investigation, torture, and prosecution.

In January, the 18-year-old Mustafa Hamdan was shot in the head with live ammunition at a peaceful sit-in and was refused admittance at a private hospital due to directives from the Mol. He is now brain-dead.

We call on Bahrain, and all States, to universally and inviolably respect the right to health and to guarantee the independence of healthcare workers.

Thank you