



Mr. President,

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain and the European-Saudi Organization for Human Rights would like to draw the Council's attention to Saudi Arabia's continued denial of the rights to freedom of expression in contravention to the Vienna Declaration.

Over the past two weeks, officials of the Saudi State Security Directorate arrested and detained over 40 individuals due to their peaceful criticism of the Saudi government. Security forces arrested them in unannounced raids, in which they also seized computers and cellphones, before holding them in incommunicado detention. Among those detained are prominent clerics, academics, poets, and economists, as Salman al-Oada, Isam al-Zamel, Hassan al-Maliki. While the Saudi government claims the individuals work for foreign states, and threatened to try them under the Terrorism law with sentences may reach 20 years, the individuals were instead detained for using their social media accounts to criticize Saudi Arabia's policies towards Qatar.

Within the past week, Saudi authorities arrested two prominent human rights defenders, Abdulaziz al-Shubaily and Isa al-Hamid. Both are cofounders of, the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association, which was forced to close in 2013 in the face of government persecution.

Despite the Vienna Declaration's call for states to respect and promote fundamental freedoms, Saudi Arabia continues to target peaceful dissidents because of their peaceful expression. We call on the kingdom to end its suppression of activists and peaceful dissidents and to commit to upholding the VDPA.

Thank you.