

Mr. President,

Alsalam and ADHRB wish to raise our concerns over States' violations to the VDPA relating to freedom of expression, particularly the targeting of journalists for reprisals and abuse.

For example, in Bahrain, the government has effectively closed off all public spaces and methods for freedom of expression. In June 2017, the government dissolved the last independent newspaper, *al-Wasat*. Previously, in 2011, the paper's co-founder Kareem Fakhrawi was tortured to death by Bahrain security officers. The officials responsible were not charged with torture but with lesser crimes and were ultimately sentenced to only three years in prison.

Further, the Bahraini authorities shot and killed 22-year-old videographer Ahmed Ismail Hassan on 31 March 2012. Ahmed was filming a protest against the Formula One Grand Prix in Bahrain when security forces and riot police began firing tear gas and rubber bullets at the protesters. He was shot in the leg and later died from his injuries.

Despite these violations, the Bahraini authorities have failed to prosecute crimes against journalists – rather, the government continues to harass, threaten, and prosecute journalists for speaking out.

We therefore call on all States, including Bahrain, to end impunity for crimes against journalists, and to ensure the protection of fundamental human rights like freedom of speech and expression, in line with the VDPA.

Thank you.