

Mr. President,

ADHRB would like to raise concerns about reprisals by Gulf Cooperation Council states against human rights defenders and activists for their engagement with the United Nations.

In the UAE, prominent rights activists Ahmed Mansoor and Dr. Nasser bin Ghaith have been sentenced each to ten years in prison on freedom of expression charges. Mansoor's detention, disappearance, and conviction stem in part from his work with the Human Rights Council, including for having raised the case of Dr. bin Ghaith with UN bodies and mechanisms.

In Saudi Arabia, authorities have repeatedly targeted, harassed, and detained women's rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul. In February 2018, she participated in Saudi Arabia's CEDAW review in Geneva; when she returned to Saudi Arabia she was detained and placed under a travel ban. Then, in May 2018, she was detained again alongside almost a dozen other women's rights activists.

Only a couple weeks ago, Saudi Arabia briefly detained Radhya Almutawakel and Abdulrasheed Alfaqih, the President and the Executive Director of the Yemen human rights organization Mwatana, who has prominently advocated for the establishment of the Group of Eminent Experts in front of the Human Rights Council.

The targeting and detention of activists by GCC and HRC Member States Saudi Arabia and the UAE for their speech and engagement with international organizations and human rights mechanisms demonstrates their antipathy toward criticism and dissent. We call on the Council to firmly address all cases of reprisals, and consider suspending the membership of Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Thank you.