

Mr. President,

ADHRB remains concerned over some states's continued disrespect for the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action's call to protect individuals from discrimination.

For example, Saudi Arabia continues to discriminate against its Shia minority community in numerous ways, most egregiously by sentencing Shia activists to death based on bogus religiously-motivated, counter-terror charges.

On January 2, 2016, the government executed prominent Shia cleric and outspoken peaceful social justice activist Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. Sheikh Nimr had long advocated for political freedom, human rights, and an end to oppression for all Saudis. He also spoke out against anti-Shia sectarian violence, becoming an icon for Saudi Shia Muslim's struggle for more political and religious freedom. In his sermons, he explicitly disavowed violence, telling his followers that "weapons are forbidden," as the "weapon of the word is mightier than the weapon of bullets." Because of his outspoken advocacy, authorities sentenced him to death on spurious terror charges. They executed him along with 46 others.

There are currently at least 45 men on death row for religiously-motivated counter-terror charges, including: Abdullah al-Zaher, Mojtaba al-Suwaiket, Ali al-Nimr, Dawood al-Marhoon, and Abbas al-Hassan. Uncoincidentally, all of them are Shia.

The DDPA directs States to counter discrimination and intolerance in all its forms. We call upon Saudi Arabia to uphold the principles of the Declaration by providing protections for, and working to end discrimination against, religious and racial minorities.

Thank you