



Submission pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 32/31 on Civil Society Space for the report of High Commissioner for Human Rights

Section 1: Engagement with the United Nations Human Rights Council

International human rights mechanisms and fora, chief among them the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC), are critical avenues of engagement for civil society actors – especially those whose country or region of focus imposes significant restrictions on domestic civil society space. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) first engaged with the HRC during its 21st session in September 2012 and has participated in every regular session since HRC25 in March 2014. HRC sessions provide an important opportunity for ADHRB and its partners to raise concerns about particular instances of human rights abuses as well as thematic areas of concern. At HRC sessions, ADHRB and its partners typically engage by organizing delegations of human rights defenders and activists to attend the session; delivering oral interventions during interactive dialogues and general debates; submitting written statements; holding side events to facilitate discussion on key human rights issues; and meeting with Member and Observer State delegations, as well as representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Special Procedures mandate holders, and other UN bodies and mechanisms.¹

As noted, the ability to engage with the various actors taking part in HRC sessions is particularly important for organizations – like ADHRB – that seek to raise awareness about human rights conditions in states that heavily restrict civil society space. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, including Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, place extremely tight constraints on the ability of in-country civil society actors to operate freely.² Many rights, including the rights to free expression and association, are extensively circumscribed, if not outright criminalized. States and state-sponsored human rights institutions, meanwhile, consistently fail to provide comprehensive and accurate information about the human rights conditions in these countries. It is therefore increasingly imperative for civil society actors on the ground and their international partners, which include non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and diaspora communities around the world, to engage with institutions like the HRC. HRC sessions allow civil society actors to call international attention to human rights concerns that might otherwise go unheard, and to provide information that goes unreported by states. ADHRB, for example, works closely with activists in Bahrain who are either not consulted by the government or are actively targeted

¹ For an overview of ADHRB engagement at recent HRC sessions, see: “An Overview of ADHRB Engagement at the 34th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council,” *ADHRB*, 30 March 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/03/12114/>; “An Overview of ADHRB Engagement at the 33rd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council,” *ADHRB*, 3 October 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/10/overview-adhrb-engagement-33rd-session-united-nations-human-rights-council/>. For an overview of ADHRB engagement at HRC sessions 25 through 32, see: <http://www.adhrb.org/page/1/?s=overview>, pages 1 and 2.

² For more information on civil society space in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, see: ADHRB, Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, and Bahrain Center for Human Rights, *Bahrain’s Third Cycle UPR: A Record of Repression*, 2017, http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017.2.28_Web-Version_ADHRB_BCHR_BIRD_Bahrain-3rd-Cycle-UPR-Assessment.pdf, Section L.1; and ADHRB and Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, *A Midterm Report on Saudi Arabia’s UPR Second Cycle: Analyzing Saudi Arabia’s Refusal to Reform*, 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Saudi-UPR-Midterm-Report-Electronic-Version.pdf>, Section C.1.



for reprisal by the government, and HRC sessions provide an opportunity for them to communicate their experiences and their documentation concerning human rights violations.

In addition to providing a platform for activists and civil society organizations to share their concerns, HRC sessions allow independent civil society actors to dialogue with states on human rights issues, and to respond to their characterizations of their respective human rights records. The governments of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, for example, regularly highlight their commitments to certain human rights principles while omitting evidence of human rights abuses in other issue areas. In most cases, they fail to acknowledge alternative reports or information that conflicts with predetermined narrative. ADHRB and its partners, however, are able to use the HRC as a forum through which such narratives can be interrogated.

HRC sessions also allow civil society organizations to engage with UN Special Procedures offices as well as representatives from UN Member States from around the world. ADHRB and its partners, for example, utilize HRC sessions in order to meet with numerous state delegations, the Office of the High Commissioner, and Special Rapporteurs in order to inform them about the human rights conditions in countries like Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Without the HRC providing a platform for such engagement, it would be far more difficult to arrange to meet personally with representatives of such a large number of foreign governments and UN human rights offices. States, OHCHR and Special Procedures consistently welcome the information and expertise that civil society organizations are able to provide. Likewise, organizations like ADHRB are keen to stay updated regarding the most effective means of engaging with these actors. In several Council sessions, coordination with state diplomats has led to important Joint Statements concerning the human rights conditions in Bahrain. During the 30th HRC session in September 2015, for example, the Swiss delegation delivered the fifth Joint Statement on the human rights situation in Bahrain.³ Thirty-five states signed on to the statement.

Section 2: Engagement with UN human rights mechanisms

ADHRB remains committed to active engagement with the UN Special Procedures and treaty bodies as a prime means of contributing to international civil society. ADHRB regularly documents instances of individual human rights abuses and submits complaints to UN human rights mechanisms on behalf of victims and victims' families. ADHRB also periodically submits complaints on large-scale patterns of human rights abuse and thematic areas of concern. The ability to interact with UN human rights mechanisms in this way is particularly important in the context of countries that lack independent and credible judiciaries and/or national human rights institutions, such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.⁴

³ “33 States Join 5th UN Joint Statement on Human Rights in Bahrain,” *ADHRB*, 17 September 2015, <http://www.adhrb.org/2015/09/ngos-welcome-5th-un-joint-statement-on-human-rights-in-bahrain/>.

⁴ For more information on the lack of independence and credibility of such institutions in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, see: ADHRB and Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, *Subservient and Unaccountable: A Shadow Report on the Bahraini Ministry of the Interior's Ombudsman and Bahrain National Institute for Human Rights*, 2014, http://adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ADHRB_Mechanism_Final-web_REV2.pdf; ADHRB, Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, and Bahrain Center for Human Rights, *Bahrain's Third Cycle UPR: A Record of Repression*, 2017, http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017.2.28_Web-Version_ADHRB_BCHR_BIRD_Bahrain-3rd-Cycle-UPR-Assessment.pdf, Sections A and G; ADHRB, *The Pretense of Progress: A Report on the Implementation of Saudi Arabia's Recommendations from the*



Engaging with UN human rights mechanisms has allowed ADHRB to document and report on abuses, hold governments accountable on individual cases, and seek redress for victims.

ADHRB submitted more than 100 complaints to the offices of various Special Procedures in 2016. Since beginning its complaint program in 2013, ADHRB has submitted complaints to 16 different Special Procedures offices, including both Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups. ADHRB also regularly interacts with the complaint procedure of the HRC itself. Over the last two months of 2016, ADHRB submitted information on 22 different cases in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. ADHRB is also engaged in an ongoing effort to promote the appointment of Special Rapporteurs on the human rights situations in both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. ADHRB's interaction with UN human rights treaty bodies has included the submission of reports and complaints to the Committee Against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

ADHRB also considers its interaction with UN human rights mechanisms to be particularly important because the Government of Bahrain has repeatedly failed to meaningfully engage with UN bodies, including Special Procedures. For example, the Bahraini government postponed and effectively cancelled a country visit from the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, Juan Méndez, which was scheduled for May 2013. This was the second such postponement, and the government has still now allowed the mandate to visit Bahrain. In his statement upon the second postponement, Méndez explicitly expressed his regret that he would not be able to meet with civil society organizations that were expecting his visit.⁵ The government's refusal to cooperate with UN Special Rapporteurs severely inhibits the ability of civil society organizations inside Bahrain to benefit from training and other forms of coordination with these UN experts. The Government of Bahrain has not allowed any Special Procedure mandate holders to visit the country since 2006.

The ability of independent civil society actors to interact with UN human rights mechanisms and submit complaints thereto is extremely important. In some cases, a complaint might lead to uncovering the whereabouts of a person subjected to enforced disappearance or the release of an individual that the state has arbitrarily detained. However, if that type of success is not immediately forthcoming, the submission of complaints nonetheless serves to exert diplomatic pressure, preserve the factual record, and potentially prevents victims from further abuse by holding governments accountable to the international community.

Section 3: UPR process & OHCHR engagement with civil society

A. UPR

Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, 2015, http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ADHRB_Pretense-of-Progress_v1_web.pdf; ADHRB and Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, *A Midterm Report on Saudi Arabia's UPR Second Cycle: Analyzing Saudi Arabia's Refusal to Reform*, 2016, Sections B and C.4.

⁵ "Bahrain / Human Rights: Government effectively cancels UN Special Rapporteur on torture's visit," *OHCHR*, 24 April 2013, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://newsarchive.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13261&LangID=E>.



ADHRB sees great value in the UN Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights (UPR) and has so far engaged with the UPR process for both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. In advance of Bahrain's third review cycle in May 2017, ADHRB and its partners submitted a number of individual and joint stakeholder submissions to the UPR Working Group on a wide variety of thematic issue areas, ranging from torture to religious discrimination and restrictions on the freedom of expression. These submissions drew on ADHRB's previous midterm assessment⁶ of Bahrain's second-cycle UPR implementation in 2014, as well as our recent final assessment.⁷ These submissions and reports also propose recommendations that we believe should be included in Bahrain's third UPR cycle. Though the Bahraini government refused to consult with ADHRB and many other independent civil society organizations in the UPR process, despite direct outreach from ADHRB (see Section 4, below), we have been able to use the international fora to organize meetings with states and other interested stakeholders on the subject. ADHRB held a pre-session panel discussion during HRC34 and participated in UPR Info's pre-session engagement event in April 2017. These have been very valuable means through which to share our findings on human rights conditions in Bahrain with the international community and to advocate for specific reforms, as well as to promote constructive bilateral and multilateral engagement on Bahrain.

Additionally, ADHRB has produced midterm assessments of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia's second-cycle UPR implementation statuses,⁸ and will be actively involved in the stakeholder submission process in advance of the Saudi Arabia's third cycle review. ADHRB also produced an official stakeholder submission for the United Arab Emirate's third cycle review.

B. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

In the past, OHCHR engagement with civil society organizations in Bahrain has also yielded some positive results. In addition to cooperating with OHCHR technical teams itself, the Government of Bahrain has, on several occasions, permitted civil society representatives, human rights defenders, and victims of human rights abuses to meet with OHCHR teams. OHCHR has also had the opportunity to provide training to civil society actors that was aimed at increasing their capacity to engage with UN bodies. OHCHR engagement with Bahraini civil society actors has also allowed victims of human rights abuses to communicate with UN human rights mechanisms directly and thereby seek redress. Unfortunately, the government has often followed up this degree of cooperation with OHCHR with acts that serve to suppress civil society. The Government of Bahrain has also failed to admit a UN Special Procedures mandate holder for an official country visit since 2006.

In April 2010, then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay conducted a tour of the Gulf region that included a stop in Bahrain. While she was in Bahrain, Pillay met with civil society members

⁶ *A Follow-Up Report on Bahrain's UPR Second Cycle: The Deteriorating Human Rights Situation in Bahrain*, ADHRB, February 2014, http://adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ADHRB_February2014_web.pdf

⁷ *Bahrain's Third Cycle UPR: A Record of Repression*, ADHRB, Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), and Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), 7 March 2017, <https://www.adhrb.org/2017/03/11848/>

⁸ *A Midterm Report on Saudi Arabia's UPR Second Cycle: Analyzing Saudi Arabia's Refusal to Reform*, ADHRB and BIRD, 16 June 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/midterm-report-saudi-arabias-upr-second-cycle-analyzing-saudi-arabias-refusal-reform/>



and human rights defenders, who were able to share their reflections on human rights conditions in the country as well as suggest recommendations for addressing these issues.⁹

From 13 to 17 December 2011, an OHCHR team visited Bahrain.¹⁰ This visit came shortly after the release of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) report on the human rights situation in the country. OHCHR's team met with civil society actors and discussed their concerns regarding government abuses, including the violent repression of activists.¹¹ The OHCHR team also met with victims of human rights abuses, including doctors and nurses who were arrested, tortured, and fired from their positions during and after the country's 2011 pro-democracy movement.¹² OHCHR also discussed civil society's expectations regarding the government's willingness to implement the recommendations of the BICI report.¹³ After the visit, OHCHR indicated its desire to protect civil society and build confidence between the government and civil society organizations.¹⁴

From 2 to 6 December 2012, an OHCHR team of four human rights officers visited Bahrain to conduct a needs assessment mission. OHCHR and the Bahraini government agreed that discussions would include the judicial system, accountability, and measures taken to implement the recommendations of the BICI. In addition to meeting with a number of government ministries, the OHCHR team also met with representatives of civil society organizations.¹⁵

A technical team from OHCHR visited Bahrain for two months in the first half of 2014. The purpose of the visit was to assess any technical steps the Government of Bahrain had taken to address human rights abuses in the country since the last OHCHR technical mission visited in 2012. According to the Bahraini government, this visit included OHCHR consultations with both government agencies and civil society organizations and resulted in agreements relating to capacity-building for law enforcement officers and the development of national regulatory institutions in line with international human rights standards.¹⁶ However, the Government of Bahrain interfered with OHCHR's technical mission and significantly limited the scope of its operations.¹⁷ The government did not agree to allow OHCHR to provide implementation assistance or publish a report of its findings.¹⁸

⁹ "Human rights chief concludes Gulf tour," *OHCHR*, 27 April 2010, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/HRchiefconcludesGulftour.aspx>.

¹⁰ "Human Rights in Bahrain," *OHCHR* 1 February 2012, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/HumanRightsinBahrain.aspx>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ "Press briefing notes on Bahrain, Democratic Republic of Congo and Egypt," *OHCHR*, 23 November 2012, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://newsarchive.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12828&LangID=E>.

¹⁶ United Nations, Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review Working Group, *National Report: Bahrain*, A/HRC/WG.6/27/BHR/1 (13 February 2017), <https://documents-dds-un.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/031/00/PDF/G1703100.pdf?OpenElement>, 4.

¹⁷ ADHRB, *ADHRB Calls for Full Cooperation between Bahrain and OHCHR*, 2 May 2014, http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/2014.05.02_ADHRB-calls-for-full-cooperation-between-Bahrain-and-OHCHR.pdf.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*



From 16 to 18 May 2016,¹⁹ the Government of Bahrain allowed OHCHR to carry out a program in Bahrain to train civil society members on various forms of UN engagement. This OHCHR program included training regarding engagement with the UN HRC and its mechanisms. However, over the following month, the Government of Bahrain subjected activists and human rights defenders who participated in this program to travel bans as they attempted to travel to Geneva and put their training into action by engaging with the HRC's 32nd session in June 2016.

In recent months, as a result of the severe deterioration of human rights conditions in Bahrain and following acts of government reprisal, the kingdom has demonstrated that it is no longer conducive to the sorts of OHCHR engagement mentioned above. Further, the government's pattern of constricting civil society space in the aftermath of OHCHR engagement with Bahraini civil society actors – and even directly targeting those actors for reprisal – suggests that the government is not genuinely interested in such cooperation (see below).

Instead, Bahraini authorities' interests appear to be largely superficial, seeking primarily to boost the government's image internationally while undertaking insincere reforms. In this environment, the government has not agreed to provide the necessary protections and access to create a conducive environment for further OHCHR technical teams to visit the country. In this context, OHCHR cooperation with Bahrain remains effectively suspended.

During his oral update at the 36th session of the HRC in September 2017, High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Zeid al-Husseini raised concerns over the deteriorating human rights situation in Bahrain. The High Commissioner criticized the government's attempts to "paper over" human rights violations and concluded that "the democratic space in the country has essentially been shut down."²⁰

Section 4: Challenges

The Government of Bahrain targets activists and civil society members for reprisal as a result of their engagement with UN bodies. Though this is a long-running trend, it has recently increased in severity. Bahraini authorities' actions in this regard have included making threats against activists, targeting their family members, issuing travel bans, and subjecting them to arrest, detention, and torture. The situation has grown so extreme that Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour, in presenting his office's eighth report²¹ on reprisals at the 36th session of the HRC, cited Bahrain as one of the most "egregious" perpetrators of such abuses in the world.²² He emphasized that the Bahraini government's

¹⁹ *National Report: Bahrain*, 4.

²⁰ Darker and more Dangerous, Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, September 11th, 2017, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22041&LangID=E>.

²¹ (A/HRC/36/31) Report on Reprisals, Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, September 20th, 2017 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session36/Pages/ListReports.aspx>

²² "UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Cites Bahrain as 'Egregious' Perpetrator of Reprisals," ADHRB, 22 September 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/09/un-assistant-secretary-general-for-human-rights-cites-bahrain-as-egregious-perpetrator-of-reprisals/>



protracted reprisal campaign since June 2016 has created “an atmosphere of fear” in the country that has had a chilling effect on civil society engagement.

For example, Nabeel Rajab, President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), participated in the 13th session of the HRC in March 2010. In response, the Government of Bahrain accused him of terrorism and threatened him with imminent arrest.²³ In August 2012, Rajab was sentenced to three years in prison on charges that included offenses related to his cooperation with the UN system.²⁴

In May 2012, the Government of Bahrain conducted reprisals against human rights defenders that provided information to the UPR Working Group.²⁵ Several Bahraini newspaper published articles that labeled these activists as “traitors.” Bahrain’s Ministry of Interior reportedly threatened that human rights defenders returning from the UPR in Geneva with investigation over having slandered Bahrain. Upon their return, many were subjected to a public smear campaign for participating in the review.²⁶

After being release from prison, Nabeel Rajab traveled to Europe for an extended human rights advocacy tour in September 2014. During this tour, Rajab met with representative of a number of international human rights mechanisms and institutions, including OHCHR, and took part in the 27th Session of the HRC. Upon his return to Bahrain, the authorities arrested Rajab and charged him with “publicly insulting official institutions.” Many observers, including several UN Special Procedures mandate holders, considered the government’s action in this regard to be an act of reprisal for Rajab’s cooperation with the UN and its human rights mechanisms.²⁷

The authorities most recently re-arrested Rajab in June 2016, and on 10 July 2017 he was sentenced to two years in prison for giving interview to the media in which he discussed restrictions on press freedom in Bahrain. He faces up to another 15 years in prison if he is convicted in a second ongoing case stemming from tweets he posted about the war in Yemen and torture in Bahrain.²⁸ The UN Secretary-General’s recent report on reprisals, presented at the 36th HRC session by Assistant Secretary-General Andrew Gilmour, expressed serious concern that the Bahraini government’s repeated targeting of Rajab is “connected to his engagement with the Human Rights Council.”²⁹

²³ “Reprisals against Human rights Defenders in Egypt and Bahrain Denounced at the UN,” *Bahrain Center for Human Rights*, 16 September 2010, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/3355>.

²⁴ “Bahrain: Reprisals and intimidation against human rights defender Mohammed Al-Maskati must end immediately,” *Bahrain Center for Human Rights*, 19 September 2012, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/5434>.

²⁵ United Nations, Human rights Council, *Cooperation with the United Nations, its representations and mechanisms in the field of human rights: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/HRC/21/18 (13 August 2012), http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session21/A-HRC-21-18_en.pdf.

²⁶ “Bahrain: Reprisals and intimidation,” *BCHR*.

²⁷ United Nations, OHCHR, *Communication to the Government of Bahrain*, UA/BHR/13/2014 (14 October 2014), [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/28th/Public - UA Bahrain 14.10.14 \(13.2014\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/28th/Public%20-%20UA%20Bahrain%2014.10.14%20(13.2014).pdf), 2.

²⁸ “Bahrain Postpones Nabeel Rajab’s Appeal against Two-Year Prison Term,” ADHRB, 25 October 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/10/bahrain-postpones-nabeel-rajabs-appeal-against-two-year-prison-term/>

²⁹ “UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Cites Bahrain as ‘Egregious’ Perpetrator of Reprisals,” ADHRB, 22 September 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/09/un-assistant-secretary-general-for-human-rights-cites-bahrain-as-egregious-perpetrator-of-reprisals/>



On 8 August 2015, Bahraini authorities arrested interfaith activist and human rights defender Maytham al-Salman as he returned from attending a conference on hate speech that was organized by the HRC.³⁰ The government charged al-Salman with “inciting hatred against the system of government,” and placed him under a travel ban.³¹

In 2016, the Government of Bahrain began to systematically impose travel bans³² as a means of preventing civil society actors from engaging with the HRC or other UN human rights mechanisms, as well as post facto retaliation. In June 2016, Bahraini authorities barred 13 activists from traveling internationally; at least eight had been planning to attend the 32nd HRC session in Geneva.³³ Blanket travel bans on activists were again imposed in the run-up to and throughout the 33rd HRC session in September 2016.³⁴ Between June and September 2016, Bahraini authorities subjected nearly 30 activists to these travel bans.³⁵

The Government of Bahrain also conducted reprisals against human rights defenders and civil society actors taking part in the 34th session of the HRC in March 2017. The Government of Bahrain intimidated, arrested, detained, mistreated, and allegedly tortured family members of activists as they took part in the session. Among those targeted were the family members of Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Director of Advocacy at the UK-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), and relatives of Ebtesam al-Saegh, an activist still living in Bahrain.

In early March 2017, while the 34th session of the HRC was underway, Bahraini authorities detained Alwadaei’s brother-in-law and mother-in-law.³⁶ The government charged them both with planting “fake bombs.”³⁷ Bahraini police tortured Alwadaei’s brother in law, telling him that they were seeking revenge for actions taken by Alwadaei as a human rights activist.³⁸

During the latter half of the 34th session, Ebtesam al-Saegh returned to Bahrain after speaking at the Council. Upon her arrival in Bahrain’s airport, authorities detained al-Saegh for seven hours, questioned

³⁰ “Bahrain: Charges against Maytham Al Salman must be dropped,” *Article 19*, 12 August 2015, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://www.article19.org/resources.php/resource/38080/en/bahrain:-charges-against-maytham-al-salman-must-be-dropped>.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² “Bahrain NGOs Condemn Reprisals against HRDs for UN Engagement,” *ADHRB* 2 September 2016, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/09/democratic-doublespeak-bahrain-government-spins-summer-repression/>; Danielle Lilly, “Bahrain Continues Targeting Human rights Defenders by Placing Travel Ban on Activist Enas Oun,” *ADHRB*, 2 September 2016, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/09/bahrain-continues-targeting-human-rights-defenders-placing-travel-ban-activist-enas-oun/>; Tyler Pry, “Bahrain’s Use of Travel Bans Are Reprisals Against Activists and HRDs,” *ADHRB*, 25 July 2016, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/bahrain-use-travel-bans-reprisals-activists-hrds/>; “Bahrain Authorities Prevent Civil Society Members and Human Rights Defenders from Participating in UN HRC 32,” *ADHRB*, 13 June 2016, accessed 13 April 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/bahrain-authorities-prevent-civil-society-members-human-rights-defenders-participating-un-hrc-32/>.

³³ “Bahrain NGOs Condemn Reprisals,” *ADHRB*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ “Bahrain: Activist’s Family Targeted,” *Human Rights Watch*, 6 March 2017, accessed 13 April 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/06/bahrain-activists-family-targeted>.

³⁷ Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, “Human Rights Activist: Bahrain, Backed by U.S., is Targeting My Family,” *The New York Times*, 21 March 2017, accessed 13 April 2017, <https://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2017/03/21/human-rights-activist-bahrain-backed-by-u-s-is-targeting-my-family/?smid=tw-share&r=0>.

³⁸ *Ibid.*



her about her work, and threatened her family.³⁹ The week prior, Bahraini authorities called al-Saegh's sister Bassima into Muharraq police station and questioned her about Ebtesam's activities at the HRC. According to Bassima, the police accused Ebtesam of "engaging in wrongful activities" by participating at the Council.⁴⁰

In May, al-Saegh was summoned for interrogation⁴¹ by the National Security Agency (NSA) where she was physically, psychologically, and sexually tortured. Soon after, in early July, the authorities arrested her and later charged her with "terror" offenses linked to her continued activism.⁴² Officials explicitly told al-Saegh they were targeting her in retaliation for her human rights work, including at the HRC. She was temporarily released on October 22, but her charges still stand.⁴³

Prior to the start of the most recent session of the HRC in September 2017, the Bahraini government renewed its pre-emptive reprisal campaign, targeting human rights defenders Fatima al-Halwachi and Zainab al-Khamees; Wa'ad opposition leaders Ebrahim Sharif and Radhi al-Mosawi; activist and torture survivor Rihanna al-Mosawi and her husband; and the father of Ali al-Singace, one of the three individuals put to death in January 2017 after being tortured into falsely confessing to terror crimes. All of these individuals were judicially harassed and/or subjected to a travel ban.⁴⁴ During the course of the session, ADHRB requested that the HRC Advisory Committee adopt a study on the issue of reprisals over engagement with the Council, and that it determine and publicly submit best practices for addressing these abuses.

In addition to conducting reprisals against activists who cooperate with the HRC or other UN bodies, the Government of Bahrain has consistently refused to engage with independent civil society organizations during the UPR process. In Bahrain's own UPR National Report, the government claims that the Foreign Ministry consulted with "13 [civil society] associations concerned with human rights." However, many independent Bahraini or Bahraini diaspora human rights organizations were never invited for consultation, including ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD. ADHRB contacted the Government of Bahrain directly in order to request to participate in the national consultation process in preparation for the UPR, and requested assistance from OHCHR in facilitating this request. The Bahraini government rejected ADHRB's request. One ADHRB officer submitted a 12-page visa application and formal request to travel to Bahrain to take part in the consultation, including a full itinerary, and never received a response.

³⁹ Brian Dooley, "Bahrain Regime Targets Families of Dissidents in Fresh Reprisals," *Huffington Post*, 22 March 2017, accessed 13 April 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/bahrain-regime-targets-families-of-dissidents-in-fresh_us_58d2553be4b002482d6e6caa.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ "Bahrain: Woman Human Rights Defender Tortured including Sexually Assaulted, as Bahrain renews campaign to silence peaceful critics," Amnesty International, May 31 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/6392/2017/en/>

⁴² "Profiles in Persecution: Ebtesam Abdulhusain al-Saegh," ADHRB, 11 July 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/07/profiles-persecution-ebtesam-abdulhusain-al-saegh/>

⁴³ "Bahrain Temporarily Releases Ebtesam al-Saegh, Mohamed al-Shakhoori, and Radhi al-Qatari," ADHRB, 23 October 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/10/bahrain-temporarily-releases-ebtesam-al-saegh-mohamed-al-shakhoori-radhi-al-qatari/>

⁴⁴ "Bahrain Launches Renewed Reprisal Campaign Ahead of HRC36," ADHRB, 6 September 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/09/bahrain-launches-renewed-reprisal-campaign-ahead-of-hrc36/>