

Hello, my name is Husain Abdulla, and I am the Executive Director of Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain. My organization and I have been working to document Bahrain's lack of compliance with the recommendations made by its fellow UN Member States in the Universal Periodic Review since 2013, when we first released a shadow report on Bahrain's second cycle midterm. That report, released a decade ago, showed what we thought at the time to not only be a purposeful lack of conformity with the observations and wishes from the international community, but also intentional derogation of its promises and duties, as the government made misleading statements about its progress towards resolving its human rights violations.

**CHANGER SLIDE** We said in 2013 that those misleading statements were made not merely to the international community, but to individual countries – when France asks the Government of Bahrain to repeal laws criminalizing free speech conduct on Twitter, for example, and Bahrain then states that it has made progress in implementing that recommendation, the Government of Bahrain misleads not just us, but also the French government - as well as all of its peers at the Human Rights Council.

That was our message in 2013. It says a lot, then, that our message is virtually identical in 2022. The Government of Bahrain claims progress on virtually every single one of its human rights reforms, but our data suggests quite the opposite. **CHANGER SLIDE**

On the subject of free speech, Bahrain received 23 recommendations, noting two and accepting 21. By our judgment, they have made little to no progress in implementing these recommendations, and in some cases have even backslid. Legitimate human rights defenders remain in prison, many of them on *de facto* death row as the government refuses to provide them life-saving medication. The government implemented no news laws regarding protecting human

rights defenders or decriminalizing speech on social media. Meanwhile, a network of Bahraini laws, chiefly including the Penal Code, Cybercrime Law, and Counterterrorism Law, allow the government to prosecute anyone simply for publicly criticizing the government or its officials.

#### CHANGER SLIDE

The right to organize and assemble is still under attack. Impromptu and unauthorized gatherings of five persons or more are completely illegal in the Kingdom – making most backyard barbecues an offense against the state, and any peaceful protest a crime worthy of torture. Further, there exists no right to politically organize, as opposition parties have been banned and their leaders arrested indefinitely. Opposition leaders including Sheikh Ali Salman, Hassan Mushaima, Abdulwahab Hussain, and a grand host of others remain shackled behind bars, while human rights defenders including Abdulhadi al-Khawaja are imprisoned simply for asking for a better tomorrow. **CHANGER SLIDE**

The use of torture is, simply put, systematic in Bahrain. Persons suspected of contrary political activity or opinion are disappeared, resurfacing only after a lengthy bout of torture that can include beatings ranging from “light” to life-threatening, the breaking of bones and the abuse of sexual organs, foot-whipping, electrocution, and rape. Some prisoners report having to watch their family members go through similar treatment, or that police officers will threaten to rape their female relatives. Men have been sodomized; women have been penetrated – and all of this treatment has been documented in UN Working Group decisions and civil society reporting. ADHRB itself has documented hundreds of cases of torture occurring in Bahrain’s police stations, criminal investigatory directorate, and Jau prison. **CHANGER SLIDE**

How, then, do we respond, if Bahrain has made no progress in implementing any of its recommendations even from a decade ago? I believe the answer is simple: answer no progress

with no progress, and reiterate the recommendations from the previous cycle - word for word.

Further, make it clear that the very worst transgressions must be eliminated: Bahrain must hold accountable those guilty of sexual torture, must eliminate restrictions on political and opposition organization, and must amend any laws that criminalize peaceful criticism of government activities.

Thank you.