

Human Rights Council 21st session

Item 6: UPR Bahrain

Joint statement

Union of Arab Jurists, North-South 21

Delivered by: Fatima Salahuddin

Mdm President,

This statement also represents the view of many NGOs in Bahrain, such as The Karama Society for human rights, Bahrain Jurist Society, and Mabada Society for human rights. We all support the reform process that Bahrain has undertaken and appreciate its willingness to cooperate with the Human Rights mechanism.

We welcome the pledge of the government of Bahrain to reform its media laws. However, the delay of the media law is somewhat disconcerting. The new law should ensure freedom of opinion and expression in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human rights and international standards. We urge the government for swift action and without delay.

It is also worth noting that the censorship of websites reflects badly on Bahrain's progress. The censorship needs to be restricted within clear boundaries which do not violate what is the norm in democratic societies.

Bahrain's commitment to protecting children's right has been lauded. However, Bahrain has been witnessing serious violations against children who were used in protests and demonstrations; we feel that the government needs to implement stronger laws to protect these children. Children have been used in unprecedented methods to block roads, hurl Molotov cocktails and other violent methods to cause havoc and fear, thus not only infringing on human rights but also on the children's rights. We call on the government to launch an investigation relating to such crimes.

We commend the decision to drop all charges pertaining to freedom of speech. Nevertheless, we do believe that the changes to the judicial system in Bahrain are slow and must act more efficiently.

We consider the collaboration between the Ministry of Interior and the International Committee of the Red Cross a step in the right direction.

Thank you