

Mr. President,

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain welcomes the High Commissioner's remarks on the realization in all countries of economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as the rights of migrants. We are deeply concerned that while some states prepare for major international cultural events, they not only restrict the artistic and cultural expression of their own citizens, but also exploit the migrant workers who make the event possible. This trend prevails in Qatar, which – in the run-up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup – has consistently failed to guarantee the rights of citizen and non-citizen alike.

In 2011, for example, Qatari officials detained the poet Mohammed al-Ajami on charges related solely to his art. After a secret trial marred by due process violations, al-Ajami was convicted of 'encouraging the overthrow of the nation's ruling system,' and ultimately sentenced to 15 years in prison. This past fall, the Special Rapporteur on cultural rights described the penalty imposed on al-Ajami as "political censorship to art and expression."

While imprisoning its own citizens for creating art, the Qatari government also neglects the rights of migrant workers employed in its

massive World Cup construction projects. In 2013, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants reported that the country's labor system is a "source of abuse and exploitation." That same year, the International Trade Union Confederation estimated that 1,200 migrant laborers had died in Qatar. It predicted that at least 4,000 will die before the World Cup occurs.

As it prepares to hold one of the largest athletic and cultural events in the world, Qatar must respect the rights of the artists and laborers already there – Qatari or otherwise. We call on the Government of Qatar to release all those imprisoned on charges related to free expression, and to protect the rights of its vast migrant population. Thank you.