

Mr. President,

Alsalam Foundation together with Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy call the Council's attention to the deeply troubling developments this month in Bahrain.

In recent days, we have seen unprecedented declines in Bahrain in terms of both civil society and political space. Following her release, the government of Bahrain forced the human rights activist, Zainab al-Khawaja, into exile. Since the beginning of this Session, Bahrain has placed at least 10 human rights defenders under travel ban while attempting to travel to Geneva. Meanwhile, last week, the government re-arrested Bahrain's most prominent human rights defender, Nabeel Rajab.

Political developments this month have been even more stunning. On 1 June, a Bahraini appeals court increased the sentence against Sheikh Ali al-Salman, the Secretary General of the largest opposition party in Bahrain, al-Wefaq. Last week, the Minister of Justice ordered al-Wefaq suspended, and ordered that the society's activities ceased, their accounts frozen, and their headquarters shuttered.

All of these steps culminated in the government's move Monday to denaturalize Sheikh Isa Qassim, the preeminent spiritual leader of Bahrain's majority Shia community, and reportedly ordered his deportation within 72 hours. Sheikh Isa's targeting resulted in thousands of Bahrainis taking to the street in numbers not seen since 2011, all vowing to protect the spiritual leader of their community from statelessness, deportation and exile.

In light of the rapid escalation of the political and human rights crisis in Bahrain, we call on this Council to convene a special session on Bahrain, and to appoint a special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Bahrain.

Thank you.