



United Nations Human Rights Council: 21<sup>st</sup> Session  
Item 3, Panel on Cooperation with the United Nations: Oral Intervention  
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Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)

Delivered by: Mr. Mohammed Al Maskati

Thank you Chairperson,

My name is Mohammed Al-Maskati. I am the President of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights. Over the course of the last three days, after having tweeted that I was attending this Council, I have received more than a dozen anonymous phone calls threatening my life and the safety of my family for my engagement here. None-the-less, I have chosen to speak today because my case is not unique. Over the last year the government of Bahrain has increasingly attacked and intimidated any rights defender who attempts to engage with the United Nations human rights system.

In fact, throughout the entire Gulf region, civil society is subjected to increasing attacks and intimidation for engaging with UN rights bodies. This development indicates a region-wide attempt by governments in the Gulf to cut off local rights defenders from the United Nations and the outside world.

The case of Dr. Mohamed Fahad Al Qahtani of Saudi Arabia, included in the Secretary General's report, is a clear example. After submitting numerous communications to the WG on Arbitrary Detention Dr. Al Qahtani is currently being tried in a Saudi court for providing (quote) "false information as evidence to official international apparatuses" and (quote)"provoking international organizations to adopt stances against the Kingdom" (unquote). He faces up to 5 years in prison and 800,000 US dollar fine. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September the judge in his case ruled that his trial should not be public. We fear his summary imprisonment will soon follow, without setting a date for his next hearing. We fear his summary imprisonment will soon follow. Several members belonging to Dr. Al Qahtani's organization are also facing prosecution at the moment. Another case highlighted in the report is that of Mr. Fadel Al Manasef, who remains in solitary confinement since his arrest four months ago, awaiting for the exceptional court that is viewing his case to set a date for his next hearing.

The systematic repression of those who cooperate with the UN occurring throughout the Gulf region not only constitutes grave rights violations, but also represents a dire institutional threat to the United Nations.

Committing a pattern of such acts, as in the case of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, should automatically trigger reconsideration of a states membership within this Council, and strongly inform future elections for membership to this body.

Thank you Chairperson.