



CAIRO INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES
Institut du Caire pour les études des droits de l'homme
مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان

United Nations Human Rights Council: Session 21
Item 4: General Debate- Oral Intervention
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
17 September, 2012

Delivered by: Paola Salwan

Thank you Madam President.

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies would like to bring to the attention of the UN Human Rights Council the harsh crackdown on human rights defenders and civil society currently taking place in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

Since protests for democratic reform erupted throughout the region, including in several Gulf countries, almost all governments of the Gulf region have carried out a society wide crackdown on almost any form of political dissent, or democracy and human rights activism. This has been carried out in an attempt to silence these actors and insulate themselves from having to make any substantial reforms. The regional character of this repression was reflected in the decision of the Gulf Cooperation Council to send in troops to Bahrain in order to aid the government of Bahrain to stifle popular protests for democratic reform earlier this year.

As highlighted in a Written Intervention submitted by our organization and partners, this session human rights defenders and democracy activists in Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been increasingly subjected to reprisals for international engagement, unfair trials, arbitrary imprisonment, forced disappearances, torture and other grave violations of human rights. In almost all instances “security” and “terrorism” is legally invoked to strip citizens of all rights and subject them to a combination of the abuses highlighted above.

As we are talking, tens of prominent human rights defenders from these countries are being sentenced to harsh prison terms; while many governments around the world would like to turn the other way and pretend such events are not occurring out of political expediency- we urge concerned UN member states to request a special debate over the protection of human rights defenders in the Gulf region.

Thank you Madam President