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ORAL STATEMENT
Item 6:
Consideration of UPR reports: Bahrain

UN Human Rights Council
Fifty-second session
27 February–31 March 2023

Mr. President,

Since 2012 Bahrain has outlawed three political parties legally registered with the government to participate in elections: the Shia opposition party Amal, the non-sectarian opposition party Wa'd and the Shia opposition party al-Wefaq, which until today is the party that has achieved the highest number of elected parliamentarians under the 2002 constitution.

Bahrain has put the leader of al-Wefaq, Ali Salman, in prison for life on false charges of spying, after arresting him for giving political speeches criticizing the government. Amnesty International urges Bahrain to reverse its decision to merely note, without accepting, the recommendation to reinstate banned political associations,¹ and calls on the government to return to levels of political freedom that were considered an ordinary part of constitutional life before 2011.

Mr President,

Bahrain continues to arbitrarily detain individuals for the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, notably 10 leaders of the anti-government protests in 2011 who have been held as prisoners of conscience for 12 years now.

Amnesty International once again expresses its grave disappointment that Bahrain has merely noted repeated calls to release prisoners of conscience, including the recommendation by Denmark that it release the Danish national and victim of torture AbdulHadi al-Khawaja.² This recommendation should be implemented immediately.

¹ UN Human Rights Council, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (WG UPR), Report: Bahrain, 11 January 2023, UN Doc. A/HRC/52/4, recommendation 124.131 (Netherlands); A/HRC/52/4/Add.1, 16 February 2023, p. 8.

² WG UPR, Report: Bahrain (previously cited), recommendations 124.94 (Denmark), 124.124-126 (United States of America, Ireland/Norway) and its addendum UN Doc. A/HRC/52/4/Add.1, 16 February 2023, p. 9.

Mr President,

Special Procedure mandates covering issues of torture and other ill-treatment and arbitrary detention have not been able to visit since 2001 despite repeated requests.

We regret that Bahrain has only noted and not accepted all recommendations calling on it to accept requested visits by UN special procedures, including recommendations specifically mentioning the Special Rapporteur on Torture.³ Amnesty International calls on Bahrain to reverse this decision, issue a standing invitation to all Special Procedures and to facilitate visits without further delay.

Thank you.

³ WG UPR, Report: Bahrain (previously cited), recommendations 124.28 (Netherlands), 124.29 (Czechia, Finland), 124.31 (Latvia), 124.32 (Luxembourg), 124.33 (Montenegro), 124.35 (Switzerland) and its addendum A/HRC/52/4/Add.1, 16 February 2023, p. 3.