



# INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

## SUMMARY REPORT OF ICSFT'S ADVOCACY ACTIVITY AT THE 33<sup>RD</sup> HRC SESSION

### GENEVA, SWITZERLAND



The 33rd session of the Human Rights Council (HRC33) concluded on 30 September 2016 in Geneva, after three weeks of intense work. In the context of International Council Supporting Fair Trial's (ICSFT) broader advocacy engagement effort, during the 33rd Human Rights Council Session, ICSFT participated in plenary debates as well as interactive dialogues and other fora, organized four side events and three peaceful gatherings in front of the UN Geneva office.

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ICSFT successfully held bilateral meetings with relevant stake holders including, inter alia, the office of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the office of Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and discussed the growing government repression against human rights defenders and lack of freedom of expression and association in the Gulf Region. In addition ICSFT held a press briefing at the Geneva Press Club denouncing the wrongful sentencing of human rights defender and lawyer Dr Abdulhameed Dashti by Kuwaiti and Bahraini courts for 16 years and six months in absentia.

In his opening statement of the 33<sup>rd</sup> session, the UN High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein pointed out the growing human rights violations and government reprisal on the part of an increasing number of States including Yemen and Bahrain. He expressed his deep concern over the harassment and arrests of human rights defenders and political activists, and legislation which enables revocation of citizenship without due process in Bahrain. Further the High Commissioner mentioned that Bahrain would be well advised to comply with the recommendations of the human rights mechanisms and UPR, and engage more productively with his office and the Special Procedures. On Yemen, High Commissioner Zeid said the national investigation effort has not provided the impartial and wide-ranging inquiry that is required by serious allegations of violations and abuse, and recommended the establishment of a comprehensive

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inquiry by an international independent body. ICSFT fully supports the High Commissioners stance in this regard and calls on these states to stop the vile human rights violations and repression against human rights defenders.

During the session, ICSFT continued to advocate for the promotion and protection of human rights and human rights defenders in the Gulf Region, focusing in particular on the following issues:

- **Bahrain:** The Council failed this year to create a system to consistently respond to situations which require its attention, case in point the crackdown and reprisals against human rights defenders and civil society in Bahrain. Systemic reprisal against human rights defenders in Bahrain continue to be the norm. Bahrain has imposed travel bans against activists ahead of the 33rd session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) this month. Such acts not only show a complete disregard for the functioning of the United Nations as a whole but also highlight the fact that, despite repeated calls for action by States to end all such violations, impunity continues to surround them. During 33<sup>rd</sup> HRC session ICSFT once again pushed for an immediate end to all violations and abuses of human rights, full accountability and an end to impunity, as well as a more robust and comprehensive action from the council to increase the visibility of



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crimes being committed in Bahrain, focused on the issue of citizenship revocation, travel ban, arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances.

- **Yemen:** Despite the ongoing human rights violations and abuses, and humanitarian crisis, the UN Human Rights Council fails to open an independent international investigation into violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights law, committed by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. As per usual, the Council adopted a resolution tabled by Sudan on behalf of Arab states involved in the conflict that fails to establish an international mechanism to investigate such violations and abuses by the Saudi-led coalition, as the grave situation on the ground requires. ICSFT called for an urgent, independent and effective international investigation of alleged violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law in Yemen, and urges Member States to support such an investigation. However, following the consensual adoption of the resolution, ICSFT urged the office of the High Commissioner to additional international human rights investigators in Yemen to not only provide more technical assistance but also increase the capacity to independently collect and preserve information establishing the facts and circumstances of the violations.



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- **Saudi Arabia:** In 2016 alone the execution rate has risen to 100 in Saudi Arabia, in spite of several call from the international community to take the necessary steps to remedy the situation. Restrictions on freedom of association, expression, and movement, as well as a pervasive lack of official accountability, remain to be serious concerns in the regime. Further Saudi led military coalition is carrying out a devastating air bombardment campaign in Yemen that could amount to war crimes. However despite this painful fact, the international community, in particular the relevant UN human rights bodies have refused to publicly criticize the country, thus giving such intolerable act a free pass time and again. ICSFT as per the General Assembly Resolution 60/251, which created the Human Rights Council, urged UN member states to vote to suspend Saudi Arabia from the Council. <sup>1</sup>

It remains crucial that the Council keeps the situation in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen high on its agenda, even more so now following the dramatic and rapid deterioration of the human rights.

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<sup>1</sup> General Assembly Resolution 60/251, provides that “the General Assembly, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting, may suspend the rights of membership in the Council of a member of the Council that commits gross and systematic violations of human rights.” In 2011, Libya was the first and only country suspended.



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ICSFT welcomes the appointment of several **special procedures mandate holders**, recall the obligation of all states, particularly Council members, to cooperate fully with them.

We also welcome the resolution on cultural rights and protection of cultural heritages and look forward to the one day seminar on ways to prevent and contain the destruction of cultural heritages to be held before the 36<sup>th</sup> HRC session and the consecutive report of the special rapporteur in this regard.

ICSFT in collaboration with its partners including Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, organized several side events, including Human Rights in Bahrain; Yemen- War and International Inaction; Arab Region and the War on Terror; the Destruction of Cultural Heritages in the Arab Region; and Palestinian Prisoners in Israeli Jails.

Additionally we have organized peaceful gatherings in front of Palais des Nations in solidarity with the civilian victims in Yemen and Bahrain, and Palestinian prisoners in Israeli Jails. For more information on these events please visit our website. All ICSFT statements and interventions at HRC33 can also be found on our website.

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