



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

70th Anniversary Celebration for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”



Today marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). UDHR is a concise statement of 30 unique interdependent, indivisible and interrelated human rights applying to everyone, everywhere. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948, the world in 2018 commemorates 70 years of the UDHR's existence.

The UDHR promises to all the economic, social, political, cultural and civic rights that underpin a life free from want and fear. They are not country-specific, or particular to a certain era or social group.

In the 70 years of its existence, the 30 human rights in the UDHR have become part of binding international, regional, sub-regional and national laws. These rights have also inspired the emergence of more elaborate human rights documents, enforceable treaties, treaty bodies,

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independent states, abolishment of harmful practices, progressive judicial and quasi-judicial pronouncements, and human rights campaigns across the globe.

70 years ago today the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. However human rights challenges, in particular freedom of expression remain enormous in the Middle East. Dissidents, journalists, HRDs and political oppositions are under severe repression. The human rights situation in countries like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait is rather distressing and dreadful, despite the efforts that have been put forward by rights groups and international community. The fight for human rights is not even close to victory and we could not celebrate as of yet.

Freedom of expression, association and belief is severely infringed and activists who advocate such right are subject to imprisonment, which is made possible by the discriminatory criminal justice system. Regardless of the governments' claims of human rights and political reform, the facts on the ground are gradually unfolding thanks to the unyielding efforts by the human rights defenders and organizations.

Particularly ICSFT is deeply concerned by the ongoing deterioration of human rights and the humanitarian situation in the GCC. Crimes against humanity, serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law are common, and more often than not civilians are the main victims. Mass execution of prisoners of conscious and further repression against human rights activists persists across the Region. Of note, Bahrain's human rights climate remains highly problematic where the government has imposed harsh censorship and sharply curtailed political life, and has jailed and tortured thousands, imposing capital punishments. Many have been stripped of their citizenship, members of the political opposition and human rights activists face arbitrary arrest and prosecution. Further, despite several call from the international community to take the necessary steps to remedy the situation, the Saudi Arabian authorities continue to deny human rights defenders and others of their liberty, and deprive them their basic right to freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Saudi Arabia has continued a sweeping crackdown on human rights activists. All of the country's prominent and independent human rights defenders have been imprisoned, threatened into silence or have fled the country. More and more have been sentenced to years in prison under the country's 2014 counter-terror law. To illustrate, after years of political turmoil and thanks to Saudi led military coalition and forces loyal to the president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hights, the fight for human rights is not even close to victory and we could not celebrate as of yet. We are deeply concerned by the ongoing deterioration of human rights and the humanitarian situation in the region. Crimes against humanity, serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law are common, and more often than not civilians



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are the main victims. Mass execution of prisoners of conscious and further repression against human rights activists persists across the Middle East. As such, Bahrain's human rights climate remains highly problematic where the government has imposed harsh censorship and sharply curtailed political life, and has jailed and tortured thousands, imposing capital punishments. Of note, dozens have been stripped of their citizenship, members of the political opposition and human rights activists face arbitrary arrest and prosecution. Further, despite several call from the international community to take the necessary steps to remedy the situation, the Saudi Arabian authorities continue to deny human rights defenders and others of their liberty, and deprive them their basic right to freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Saudi Arabia has continued a sweeping crackdown on human rights activists. All of the country's prominent and independent human rights defenders have been imprisoned, threatened into silence or have fled the country. More and more have been sentenced to years in prison under the country's 2014 counter-terror law. As well Yemen is in a major human rights and humanitarian crisis. Saudi led military coalition is carrying out a devastating air bombardment campaign in Yemen that amounts to war crimes. Nevertheless, despite these painful facts on the ground, the international community, in particular the relevant UN human rights bodies have refused to publicly name and shame these totalitarian regimes, thus giving such intolerable act a free pass time and again.

The Universal Declaration begins, with the powerful promise – and warning – contained in the first lines of its Preamble: "...Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

"...Disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.

"...It is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse as a last resort to rebellion against tyranny and oppression that human rights should be protected by the rule of law."

On this day of commemoration it is imperative to recognize that the circumstances we are facing right now are far from the ideal that was envisioned by the United Nations and the treaty members who had invested remarkable efforts in creating the human rights protection mechanism. And we, today, as the heir of the founding fathers, should pledge to undertake the responsibilities and never accept any compromises or give up any parts of our birthrights as a human being. More than ever now is the time to reaffirm our common humanity and vow to make a real difference in this regard.



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We have a long way to go, and too many of our leaders seem to have forgotten the powerful and prophetic words enshrined in the UDHR. We need to rectify that, not just on the 70th anniversary, but every day, every year.

The UDHR is the gift of our ancestors, to help us avoid ever having to go through what they went through.

Today is a great reminder that we need to stand up to authoritarian regimes like Saudi Bahrain UAE and end impunity.