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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Conseil International pour le soutien à des procès équitables et aux Droits de l'Homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 August 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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WHRD Ebtisam Alsaegh and the role of the National Security Agency NSA*

Bahrain's human rights climate has worsened in recent years. The country's courts convict and imprison peaceful dissenters and have failed to hold officials accountable for torture and other serious rights violations, including security forces' disproportionate use of force to quell unrest.

The authorities prosecute and jail prominent human rights activists and political opposition leaders, dissolve political opposition groups, and strip the citizenship of dissidents. Migrant workers in Bahrain continue to confront unpaid wages, passport confiscation, unsafe housing, and excessive work hours.

Human rights defenders have become a heavy burden on the government of Bahrain, because of their effective independent activities to publically reveal these violations. Equally important, the sequence of international condemnations that criticize repression in Bahrain, particularly by the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva at its annual sessions.

Recently at least 37 human rights activists were banned from travelling, in conjunction with the UN Human Rights Council's review of Bahrain (UPR), which was carried out between May 1-5, 2017. The campaign aimed at barring the activists from participating in the UPR sessions, and from exposing human rights violations.

In the period from 24th through 28th May 2017, a number of human rights activists were summoned by the National Security Agency NSA into investigation. Activists were subjected to ill-treatment and threats in order to force them to cease their human rights activities, or they would be in danger of being subjected to more severe targeting.

- **The Case of Ebtisam Alsaegh**

Ebtisam Alsaegh is a Bahraini Woman Human Rights Defenders WHRD who has been harassed by the Bahraini authorities in several previous occasions. On March 20, 2017, she was detained for seven hours at Bahrain International Airport upon her return from attending the 34th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland. She was investigated with for five hours where her passport was also confiscated.

On Tuesday, July 18, 2017, the Prosecution of Terrorist Crimes in Bahrain ordered the detention of human rights Ebtisam Alsaegh for 6 months pending investigation on charges related to terrorism, while a group of UN experts expressed concern about the arbitrary detention of Alsaegh, amid reports that she was subjected to "torture and sexual abuse".

The UN experts said "Alsaegh was deprived of her fundamental right to due process from the moment of her arrest to this day," expressing "grave concern over the information that her health has deteriorated dramatically in the last few days".

In the context of the monitoring carried by Bahraini human rights organizations and their follow-up of the legal status of Alsaegh held by the Bahraini authorities since the dawn of the 4th of July 2017, we have received with great concern the contact of human rights defender Nabeel Rajab with his family, in which he stated that he witnessed HRD Alsaegh in the Ministry of Interior Hospital in Bahrain's capital city on a wheelchair.

His son Adam Nabeel Rajab said on his personal account on "Twitter" that his father was worried about his colleague Alsaegh, and confirmed that his father Rajab did not recognize her at first, until she called him "Nabeel, Nabeel, I am Ebtisam Alsaegh", specially that he was unaware of her arrest and detention. He asked his son, "What brought Ebtisam here? Did she have a car accident?". He reported that Alsaegh looked so tired and that she was under anaesthesia.

Sources close to her family reported that Alsaegh was seen several times in the women's detention prison in the south-eastern city of Isa Town in poor condition due to torture and ill-treatment.

Moreover, reliable sources said she is kept in solitary confinement, full of insects and dirt, and that she told the female prisoners that she has been subjected to torture and huge pressure and is forced to make confessions that are not related

to her human rights work when constantly transferred to the General Investigation Directorate CID by individuals belonging to the National Security Agency NSA.

It is worth mentioning that the National Security Agency is interrogating her for extended hours of up to 12 hours a day.

- **The Return of the National Security Apparatus is a Consecration of Brutality:**

On 2 January 2017, the King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa issued Decree No. (1) of 2017 aimed at amending certain provisions of Decree No. (14) of 2002 regarding the establishment of the National Security Apparatus.

The amendment stipulates that: “Officers, non-commissioned officers and members of the National Security Apparatus shall have the status of judicial control officers for terrorist crimes, and except for such crimes, the Authority shall refer cases that require arrest or detention to the Ministry of the Interior for the purpose of taking legal action”.

The decree came to amend the King of Bahrain’s decree on November 28, 2011, which ruled that “the National Security Apparatus shall refer cases that require arrest or detention to the Ministry of the Interior for legal action”.

Despite the government’s assertions of accountability and that no individual is above the law, the bodies established to prevent ill-treatment of detainees under the custody of the Ministry of the Interior or the National Security Apparatus – the Ombudsman and the Special Investigations Unit – did not record any improvement in holding the security and perpetrators of abuses accountable.

The establishment of the National Security Apparatus in Bahrain after the restoration of its powers by the King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa coincided with an unprecedented security campaign in summoning of a group of human rights defenders and activists in documenting and monitoring violations from the ground, along with some social media bloggers. During the investigation, they were subjected to torture, ill-treatment and intimidation by the National Security Apparatus amid pro-government media campaign carried against them in the country.

In May of this year, a number of human rights defenders entered for interrogation by the National Security Service, inside the security complex, the third floor. An interrogation was initiated against the law for long hours while standing and blindfolded for this entire period. Lawyers were not allowed to follow the proceedings of the investigation, in which these activists were severely beaten.

For that, SALAM for democracy and Human rights calls for:

1. Conducting an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the practices of torture and sexual abuse of Ebtisam Alsaegh with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards.
2. Taking all necessary measures to ensure the safety and physical and psychological integrity of Ebtisam Alsaegh and her family members.
3. Releasing Ebtisam Alsaegh and all human rights defenders immediately and dropping all charges against them.
4. Stop targeting all human rights defenders in Bahrain and ensure that they are in all circumstances able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of retaliation and without any restrictions.
5. Human rights defenders in Bahrain must be able to carry out their work without fear of reprisals, and should not face detention or prosecution for exercising their right to freedom of expression.
6. Ensuring the psychological and physical integrity of all human rights defenders in Bahrain and in particular of the aforementioned individual;
7. And for ending all forms of harassment, including at the judicial level against all human rights defenders in Bahrain, and in particular against the aforementioned individuals, so that they are able to carry out their work without hindrance;

*Salam for Democracy and Human Rights, NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.