

Right Livelihood

49th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Oral statement

Item 3: General Debate – Promotion and protection of all human rights

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you.

It is no news that civic space is under attack worldwide.

In recent years, governments have been increasingly criminalising human rights work and imposing restrictions on fundamental freedoms. Right Livelihood is gravely concerned by this trend, especially by the use of arbitrary detention as a method to silence dissenting voices, as well as by the harsh detention conditions to which imprisoned activists are often subjected.

In **Saudi Arabia**, hundreds of activists are serving lengthy prison sentences for having exercised their right to freedom of opinion and expression, and have seen their right to a fair trial and due process grossly violated. Among those arbitrarily detained are **Mohammed al-Qahtani and Waleed abu al-Khair**. Their crime? Promoting democratic reforms in the country.

In **Iran**, Human Rights lawyer **Nasrin Sotoudeh** was sentenced to 38 years and 148 lashes only for carrying out her legitimate human rights activities in defense of women and children's rights. Her case is only one of many.

Belarus has been on a crusade against its civil society. There are currently over 1000 political prisoners in the country, including numerous human rights defenders. 7 members of the prominent organisation **Human Rights Center "Viasna"** are currently behind bars.

We call on the Human Rights Council to keep these countries under close scrutiny and urge them to uphold their international human rights obligations, immediately release all human rights defenders arbitrarily detained, drop all charges against them and provide them with compensation and rehabilitation for the harm suffered.

States have the duty to ensure a safe and enabling environment for civil society.

Thank you.