

52nd session of the Human Rights Council Item 4: Human Rights Situations that require the Council's attention - General Debate

Mr. President,

Right Livelihood, ALQST for Human Rights and MENA Rights Group remain deeply concerned by the increased repression against human rights defenders and peaceful dissidents in Saudi Arabia.

In recent months, many peaceful activists have been handed lengthy prison sentences of up to 50 years, simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression. These are spent in inhumane conditions and are usually followed by travel bans of the same length, in yet another attempt to silence and intimidate activists.

Moreover, in a new and worrisome trend, several human rights defenders are being detained beyond the expiry of their sentences. Instead of being released, some have been retried, including Mohammed al-Rabiah, who was resentenced to 17 years in prison for his peaceful activism last December. Others, such as Essa al-Nukeifi and Right Livelihood Laureate Mohammed al-Qahtani have been subjected to enforced disappearance after the expiration of their sentences. Both of their families have been denied any contact with them since October 2022, and both men continue to be subjected to incommunicado detention to this day.

Mr. President,

Economic Interests must not be favoured over human rights and violations need to be called out publicly, as silence only leads to increased repression.

Hence, we reiterate our calls on the Council to urge Saudi Arabia to stop its persecution of peaceful activists, immediately provide information on the fate and whereabouts of forcibly disappeared activists and unconditionally release all human rights defenders arbitrarily detained.