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UN Human Rights Council
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Item 6:
Consideration of UPR reports

BAHRAIN

Madam President,

Amnesty International welcomes the acceptance by Bahrain of recommendations related to fair trial guarantees, including the release of those behind bars for exercising their right to freedom of expression.¹ Amnesty International remains concerned, however, that despite repeated assurances to respect the rights to freedom of expression and association, these rights continue to be denied, including in recent clamp-downs. This month, the High Criminal Court of Appeal upheld harsh sentences imposed on 13 prisoners of conscience, among them Abdulhadi al-Khawaja and Ebrahim Sharif; and in August, human rights activist Zainab al-Khawaja was arrested and now faces trial for, among other things, tearing up a picture of the King. Also in August, human rights defender Nabeel Rajab received a three year prison sentence merely for exercising his right to freedom of expression and association.

Madam President,

Amnesty International welcomes Bahrain's support of recommendations to investigate allegations of torture and ill-treatment of individuals detained after the protests in 2011 and to prosecute those responsible.² Despite recent charges brought against several officers for alleged mistreatment of prisoners, Amnesty International remains deeply concerned that true justice and accountability has not been achieved. The number of those on trial remains low with only three persons sentenced so far, and the outcome of investigations into reports of torture and killings has not been made public.

¹ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Bahrain*, 6 July 2012, A/HRC/21/6, paragraphs 115.91, 115.98, 115.100, 115.101, 115.114-115.118, , 115.122, 115.123, 115.125, 115.126, 115.130, 115.146, 115.159 (Slovakia, United States of America, Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Ireland, Norway, Mauritania, United Kingdom, Australia, Netherlands, France, Switzerland).

² *Ibid*, paragraphs 115.84-115.88, 115.92, 115.106, 115.108, 115.111, 115.112, 115.121 (Czech Republic, Italy, Austria, Maldives, Slovakia, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Finland).

While Amnesty International welcomes Bahrain's acceptance of recommendations to amend national legislation,³ we regret its rejection of recommendations to align national law with the Rome Statute.⁴ We are concerned that Bahraini law still contains vaguely worded provisions that can be used to criminalize the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, in breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Bahrain is a party. Political associations are severely restricted and are only able to organize political rallies on very limited occasions. Scores of people have been arrested in recent months for participating in demonstrations.

Madam President,

The UPR of Bahrain will have been a hollow exercise if the government does not act on the recommendations at the national level. The international community also has an important role – it must take a stand on Bahrain's continued human rights abuses and lack of accountability.

Thank you, Madame President.

³ *Ibid*, paragraphs, 115.21-115.27, 115.30, 115.32,115.33, 115.88, 115.90, 115.92, 115.99, 115.146, 115.148, 115.149, 115.151, 115.153, 115.154, 115.157, 115.160 (Belgium, Spain, UK, Slovakia, Mexico, , Ireland, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Maldives, Korea, Canada, France, Norway, Chile, Austria, , Estonia, Netherlands, Costa-Rica)

⁴ *Ibid*, paragraphs 115.15, 115.16, 115.17 (Switzerland, Finland, Hungary).