



Press statement

Civil society organisations urge Human Rights Council to condemn crackdown in Bahrain and Yemen

Johannesburg. 7 June 2011. Silence by the international community in the face of the massive crackdown on protestors, civil society and the media in both Yemen and Bahrain makes it complicit in these actions said CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) today. Echoing civil society representatives at a side event at the United Nations Human Rights Council yesterday, CIVICUS and CIHRS call on the international community to condemn the on-going repression in both countries.

“Civil society activists and citizens have been peacefully protesting for their rights in Yemen and Bahrain, yet they’ve been met by repression from their own government and silence from the international community,” said Adam Nord, Lobbying and Engagement Manager at CIVICUS. “The international community and the UN Human Rights Council in particular need to be explicit in their support for the peaceful pursuit of human rights in both countries and insist on the immediate end to violence.”

The side event, entitled ‘The Arab Protest Movements: Bahrain and Yemen in Focus’ and attended by over 60 participants, emphasised the silence of the international community in the face of widespread violations of human rights in both countries. According to Sohair Riad, a researcher on Yemen with CIHRS, around 200 protestors have been killed since the protests started in February 2011 and there is a widespread crackdown on civil society, human rights defenders and the media in the country.

Similarly, Maryam Al-Khawaja, Head of the Foreign Relations Office at the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, described the crackdown on all who supported the protests in Bahrain, from prosecution of doctors and medics who treated protestors, to the expulsion of university students who participated in protests, to a widespread clampdown on the media and civil society organisations. So far the international community has been mostly silent on the situation in Bahrain and Yemen.

“Governments often repeat that a certain threshold needs to be passed before the UN Human Rights Council should act, but the Council must not passively wait for a massacre while well documented and widespread human rights violations continue to escalate,” said Laila Matar, UN Advocacy Representative with CIHRS. “The crackdown on the rights of Yemeni and Bahraini citizens is already extreme – condemnation and political isolation from the UN Human Rights Council and foreign governments has the potential to have real impact in this situation.”

CIVICUS and CIHRS call on government members of the UN Human Rights Council to take immediate action by adopting a strong Council resolution condemning the ever increasing government attacks on civil society and human rights in Yemen and Bahrain. “The Council should also request the High Commissioner for Human Rights to brief the Council on the

situation in these countries. It is not too late to exert political pressure to reverse the repression of human rights” said Nord.

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation is a global movement of civil society dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society across the world. CIVICUS stands in solidarity with the right of all global citizens to assemble, associate and express their views peacefully.

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) is an independent regional non-governmental organisation that aims to promote respect for the principles of human rights and democracy, analyse the difficulties facing the application of International Human Rights Law and disseminate a Human Rights Culture in the Arab Region.

For more information please contact CIVICUS:

Jessica Hume (Jessica.hume@civicus.org, +1 647 961 8243), Communications Manager or
Adam Nord (adam.nord@civicus.org), Lobbying and Engagement Manager
Office Tel: +27 11 833 5959