



Final statement of

"The International Conference on challenges to Security and human rights in the Arab region"

5- 6 November 2014

Doha, Qatar

The International Conference on challenges to Security and human rights in the Arab region was held in Doha during the period 5 to 6 November 2014; The conference was jointly organized by the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar, the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers Council, the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Arab Network of National human Rights Institutions.

It was attended by high-level representatives from the ministries of interior and justice, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations in the Arab region, a number of experts in UN special procedures and contractual mechanisms on human rights and representatives of regional and international human rights organizations.

The idea of convening this conference came in the context of reaffirming the importance of respecting the rule of law in a way ensuring that persons, institutions, public and private bodies, including executive authorities, accountable to laws and regulations issued publicly, consistent with international standards of human rights, and applicable to everyone without any discrimination.

The main objectives of the conference were to discuss the relationship between maintaining security and respect for human rights while considering their basic responsibilities of the states, discuss the impact of each of them on the other, discuss issues relating to challenges in the Arab region, in addition to reviewing experiences of states in facing significant challenges in the region, as well as experiences of regional and international organizations relating to security and human rights issues.

In this context, participants discussed a number of high-priority topics, including the importance of the partnership between security institutions, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations for the promotion and respect of human rights, the importance of codes of conduct for security institutions in the field of human rights and the need to raise capacities and institutional reform in security, penal and correctional institutions in the Arab countries, including those in transition.

Participants also reviewed international and regional experiences on the relationship between the work of security and human rights institutions, the efforts of the UN special procedures and contractual mechanisms departments and the experiences of some international organizations in partnership with security institutions.

Participants discussed the human rights situation in the Arab region, and referred to the seriousness of the manifestations of extremism, exclusion, sectarianism, hate speech, violence and the threat of national security and the security of religious and ethnic minorities by terrorist groups, as well as the suffering of the human rights activists, both men and women, and civil society organizations from harassment and threats from whatever source.

Participants also discussed grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law against the Palestinian people by Israel, demanding the international community and the United Nations to take urgent measures to protect the Palestinian people, end the occupation and establish an independent Palestinian state.

Participants emphasized the following:

1. Terrorism has a negative long-term impact on the community, where it destabilizes governments, undermines civil society, threatens peace, security, and economic and social development, which seriously affect the enjoyment of human rights.
2. Maintaining security at the individual and collective levels, as a basic human right, is one of the most critical roles entrusted to states. Accordingly, States should take all necessary measures to achieve security in the framework of the rule of law and respect for human rights as stipulated in the relevant international conventions.
3. Protection of human rights does not necessarily weaken national security, and security measures do not necessarily lead to diminution of human rights.
4. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that adopted the human rights and the rule of law as their substantial basis, should provide a frame of reference for Arab countries to take advantage of it in their efforts to combat terrorism.
5. It is not permissible to link terrorism with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.

Participants recommended the following:

D) As for the obligations of States:

1. States shall establish oversight and accountability mechanisms to prevent any possibility of exploiting the powers of law enforcement authorities in taking arbitrary measures against individuals or groups.
2. States are urged to respect the Universal Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, respect and protect journalists, prevent and end torture, call upon States that have prisoners of conscience to be released, including advocates and defenders of human rights, strengthen the independence of the judiciary and the transparency of legal proceedings, respect international standards for fair trial and fight against corruption.
3. States are urged to adopt and implement measures to ensure compliance with the principles of the rule of law, equality before the law without discrimination, and avoid arbitrariness.
4. Harmonize national agreements and covenants relating to security and human rights with international standards and urge states that have not yet done so, to accede to relevant international conventions, particularly the Convention against Torture and its optional Protocol, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
5. Encourage States to cooperate with the UN special procedures of the Human Rights Council and with the contractual mechanisms.
6. Encourage States to carry out reforms in the judiciary and the security sector, whenever necessary.

As for partnership between security institutions, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations in the promotion and respect for human rights:

7. Encourage ongoing and regular dialogue between security institutions, civil society organizations and national human rights institutions, and consider the establishment of a mechanism, wherever conditions exist for it, for cooperation between them in order that the security measures are compatible with international human rights standards and with what came in the UN Code of conduct for law enforcement officials for the year 1979.

8. Provide a legislative framework and legal guarantor of the right to assembly, freedom of expression, the work of civil society organizations and journalists without harassment, as well as the guarantor of strengthening the independence of national human rights institutions.

9. Integration between national institutions in an organized educational and training framework and holding organizational meetings for education officials in national human rights institutions to formulate the above in the context of an action plan to translate the executive programs of these institutions.

10. Emphasize the importance of the media's role in the development of the relationship between national institutions, civil society and security institutions, and to encourage the media to strengthen its efforts in this area.

As for Codes of conduct for security institutions in the field of human rights and the issue of building capacities at the regional, international and local levels:

11. Urging Arab states to adopt codes of conduct of the security institutions and public employees, that take into account the commitment to human rights and its comprehensive implementation in a way compatible with the United Nations codes of conduct for law enforcement officers for the year 1979.

12. Organizing a joint seminar between national human rights commissions and security agencies in the Arab countries to assess and review the Model Code of Conduct for Arab security men and indicative code of rules of conduct for public officials and employees, accredited by the Council of Arab Interior Ministers and proposing ways to their activation.

13. Urging Arab states to promote training and education in the field of human rights to security institutions and organizations.

14. The need to take advantage of the different experiences relevant to achieving a balance between ensuring security and respect for human rights.

15. Adoption of the subject of human rights in the educational and training curriculum for academies and police training centers, including the rights of persons deprived of liberty, the right to peaceful assembly, and rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, migrant workers and other groups who need special attention, such as children, with a special consideration to the rights of women.

16. Provide all the necessary means including financial, technical and training and other resources to ensure that those in charge of the enforcement of the law perform their duties in accordance with international human rights standards, and the adoption of the commitment to human rights as a fundamental criterion in the selection and promotion of law enforcement.

As for the reform of security, penal and correctional institutions in accordance with international human rights standards:

17. Establishment and support of human rights departments in the Ministries of Interior and security institutions.

18. Investment in human resources, raising the capacity and efficiency of workers in this sector and providing suitable budget for this purpose.

19. Advancement of the security sector and penal and correctional institutions by reviewing laws governing them and the provision of financial resources for the development and modernization of the security sector.

20. Strengthening legal accountability and ensuring that there is no impunity in cases of human rights violation.

21. Activating the role of national institutions and parliamentary committees on oversight and inspection of security institutions.

22. Establishing partnerships between civil society and security institutions on the promotion of security and governance in security institutions and to ensure respect for human rights.

23. Promoting the principle of the right to access to information and transparency regarding the work of the security institutions in a way that ensure building confidence and enhancing cooperation between the community and security institutions, as stipulated in laws and investigative procedures.

24. Calling upon the Arab countries to benefit from the advisory services of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

25. Documentation of best practices and experiences of penal and correctional institutions, and exchanging them among the Arab countries.

Following-up on and implementation of the recommendations:

26. Organizing a regular conference that brings together civil society organizations, national institutions for human rights and representatives of Arab Ministries of Interior.

27. Holding national meetings organized by national human rights institutions in the presence of representatives of concerned security and government institutions and civil society organizations to activate the recommendations of the Doha conference at the national level.

28. The National Human Rights Committee in Qatar to form a working group of the conference partners to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the recommendations.

29. The President of the National Human Rights Committee in Qatar to raise these recommendations to Arab and international institutions and organizations.

Finally, participants expressed their gratitude to the State of Qatar, the National Human Rights Committee in Qatar, the Arab League, the Council of Arab Interior Ministers and the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions for their efforts to organize the conference and invite them to continue to work with relevant parties to implement the recommendations that were approved.

November 6th, 2014
Doha, Qatar