

Statement and Recommendations of the Emergency Meeting of Gulf National Human Rights Institutions

Doha – 18 March 2026

Initiated by the National Human Rights Committee, the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in the Gulf Arab States held an emergency meeting to discuss the aggressive attacks launched by the Islamic Republic of Iran against the Gulf Arab States and to examine their repercussions on the human rights situation. The meeting was convened upon the initiative of the National Human Rights Committee of the State of Qatar.

The meeting was attended by the Oman Human Rights Commission, the National Institution for Human Rights in Bahrain, the National Bureau for Human Rights in Kuwait, the Human Rights Commission in Saudi Arabia, the National Human Rights Institution in the UAE, the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

The participants affirmed their absolute condemnation of these aggressive attacks, which are inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations and have resulted in grave violations of the rules of international humanitarian law, including deliberate attacks on vital civilian facilities, leading to widespread and serious violations of international human rights law.

The participants welcomed the measures taken by the competent authorities in the Gulf States and their swift response to the challenges arising from the aggressive attacks, which strengthened the protection of the right to life and ensured that citizens, residents, and visitors continued to enjoy essential rights and services.

Her Excellency Mrs. Maryam bint Abdullah Al Attiyah, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee, affirmed that the emergency meeting reflects the deep awareness of Gulf NHRIs regarding the dangers arising from the ongoing crime of aggression, which stands in blatant contradiction to the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law.

She noted that this crime was manifested in the deliberate targeting of civilian facilities and vital infrastructure, resulting in grave and widespread violations of the rights of civilians, foremost among them the rights to life, health, personal security, and freedom of movement, in addition to severe psychological effects suffered by the population, particularly women, children, and the elderly.

Her Excellency praised the comprehensive measures undertaken by the competent authorities in the Gulf Arab States to protect lives, ensure the continuity of operations of vital facilities and institutions, and guarantee public access to essential services. She emphasized the importance of the meeting in consolidating a human rights-based approach, coordinating the human rights

position, and unifying mechanisms for monitoring, documentation, and reporting according to a common methodology that ensures data accuracy and the effectiveness of international action, thereby contributing to justice for victims and preventing impunity for perpetrators.

She welcomed the efforts made by the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions and announced support for the outcomes of its emergency General Assembly meeting. She also reiterated welcome for the UN Security Council's condemnation of the Iranian military attacks as explicit aggression and a flagrant violation of international legitimacy, given their unjustified infringement on the sovereignty of the Gulf Arab States, despite those States not participating in any hostile acts against Iran and instead leading intensive diplomatic efforts to promote international peace and security and settle disputes by peaceful means.

Mrs. Al Attiyah stated that the consequences of this aggression would negatively affect human rights worldwide and exacerbate the suffering of the most vulnerable groups, including refugees, displaced persons, and victims of armed conflicts in many countries, due to threats to global food security arising from the deliberate targeting of energy sources and the disruption of supply chains caused by restrictions on air and maritime navigation. She added that the continuation of these attacks could result in severe environmental damage and disrupt sustainable development pathways.

She further stressed that these consequences require more serious and decisive international action commensurate with the gravity of the current challenges and their potentially devastating effects. In this regard, she expressed high appreciation for the efforts of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and mandate holders of the Special Procedures.

She emphasized the necessity of convening a special session of the Human Rights Council to discuss the repercussions of the military attacks against Gulf States on the global human rights system and to issue clear recommendations aimed at ending the aggression and activating international accountability mechanisms as one of the guarantees of non-repetition.

She extended thanks to the national human rights institutions in the Gulf States, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the GCC General Secretariat, and all participants in the meeting.

She affirmed that the historic responsibility borne by Gulf human rights institutions during this exceptional phase requires moving beyond mere description toward formulating effective response measures through the adoption of a joint Gulf mechanism for monitoring, documentation, and reporting, as well as intensifying communication with UN mechanisms and relevant international institutions and organizations to ensure that the suffering of victims remains at the forefront of the international human rights agenda.

She pointed out that the meeting was not merely intended to announce a position but rather to establish an integrated monitoring and documentation mechanism reflecting belief in Gulf unity and concern for protecting rights and safeguarding the human dignity of Gulf peoples and residents.

For his part, His Excellency Counselor Sultan bin Nasser Al Suwaidi, Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs at the GCC General Secretariat, expressed appreciation to the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar for organizing the important emergency meeting and extended sincere condolences to the families of martyrs from the armed forces of GCC States and to the families of civilian victims affected by the attacks.

Al Suwaidi stated that the region is passing through an extremely sensitive and dangerous stage in light of the Iranian attacks suffered by GCC States since 28 February. He affirmed that these attacks constitute a blatant violation of the principles of international law and the UN Charter, especially with regard to respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He added that the statement issued by the GCC Ministerial Council during its extraordinary 50th meeting held on 1 March clearly affirmed Gulf unity and full solidarity among GCC States. He also welcomed the UN Security Council resolution condemning the Iranian military operations against GCC States, noting that the resolution reflects the international community's commitment to protecting international peace and security and underscores the importance of the Gulf region as a cornerstone of global economic stability and energy security.

In the same context, Her Excellency Dr. Hala Al Tuwajiri, President of the Human Rights Commission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, stated that the meeting represents an initiative stemming from awareness of the magnitude of the challenges facing the region and their possible repercussions, as well as the need to strengthen joint Gulf action in the field of human rights. She affirmed that her country condemned the Iranian attacks against the Kingdom and GCC States, as well as against several friendly Arab and Islamic countries.

She added that the Iranian attacks against civilian objects, airports, and oil facilities constitute a flagrant violation of international law, particularly international humanitarian law and international human rights law. She stressed that the rules of international law, including Article 51 of the UN Charter granting states the right to self-defense in cases of aggression, cannot be circumvented.

She pointed out that the attacks harmed civilians, civilian objects, infrastructure, and supply chains, while welcoming the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2817 and the broad international support it received. The resolution strongly condemns the attacks carried out by Iran against Gulf States and Jordan and considers these acts a violation of international law and a serious threat to international peace and security.

She further stated that the conflict in the region presents a complex reality in which the protection of civilians and civilian facilities emerges as a top priority. Armed conflicts, regardless of their nature, are among the most direct threats to human rights because of their profound and long-term effects not only on individuals but also on societies and state institutions.

For her part, Her Excellency Ms. Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, thanked the organizers for the invitation and stressed the importance of the meeting and its role in achieving tangible outcomes for the most vulnerable groups, including human rights defenders.

She expressed regret that Gulf States had been subjected to what she described as an unlawful war from the perspective of international law. She explained that her mandate focuses on individuals exercising their legitimate right to defend human rights around the world and that her principal mission is to strengthen the implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

She stated that, in the global context, many destructive policies disregard the rule of law, the principles set out in the UN Charter, and the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, treating them as inconvenient and violating international law in grave ways, thereby escalating tensions and violations.

She added that there is a need to return to the foundations, reaffirm the importance of these principles, and restore multilateralism and legal discussion concerning the use of force.

The meeting emphasized the importance of consolidating a human rights-based approach in all response measures and procedures. In its concluding outcomes, read by His Excellency Mr. Sultan bin Hassan Al Jamali, Secretary-General of the National Human Rights Committee, the meeting announced the following:

- 1. Establishing a Gulf mechanism for monitoring, documentation, and reporting to undertake joint monitoring and documentation tasks, prepare reports and statements, open channels of communication and follow-up with relevant regional and international institutions, and advocate before regional and international mechanisms, bodies, and institutions according to a unified methodology, with the aim of exposing violations, ensuring effective remedies for victims of aggression, and preventing impunity.**
- 2. Establishing a Gulf electronic platform for exchanging information, experiences, expertise, and best practices in monitoring and documentation, receiving and processing complaints, and raising awareness and education regarding international humanitarian law and international human rights law.**
- 3. Working on the preparation of a code of guiding principles for human rights responses in situations of armed conflict and exceptional**

- emergencies to consolidate a human rights-based approach and ensure the implementation of international humanitarian law standards.
4. **Supporting the efforts of the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions and committing to implementing the recommendations of its emergency General Assembly meeting held on 16 March 2026 under the title “A Human Rights Reading of the Violation of the Absolute Prohibition on the Use of Force.”**
 5. **Intensifying joint efforts and endeavors to urge UN bodies and mechanisms to take urgent action to end the attacks and to push for convening a special session of the Human Rights Council at the earliest opportunity to discuss the aggression against the Gulf Arab States and its repercussions on the human rights situation, while ensuring the activation of international criminal accountability mechanisms against those involved in serious crimes and violations.**
 6. **Calling upon the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, treaty bodies, and Special Procedures mechanisms to focus on monitoring and documenting the effects of the aggression on vital civilian facilities and energy sources and the resulting grave human rights violations.**
 7. **Keeping the emergency meeting of Gulf national human rights institutions in permanent session through the aforementioned Gulf mechanism for monitoring, documentation, and reporting, in order to follow developments on the ground, ensure rapid joint human rights coordination, and assess the effectiveness of the response and international measures taken to protect human rights under these exceptional regional circumstances.**
 8. **Advancing efforts to establish a permanent network of national human rights institutions in the Gulf Arab States as an institutional framework to strengthen joint coordination and unify positions in regional and international forums, thereby ensuring the sustainability and development of Gulf human rights action.**
 9. **Recommending the establishment of a permanent independent human rights committee within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council.**

The participants expressed thanks and appreciation to the National Human Rights Committee of the State of Qatar for its efforts, initiative, and excellent organization of the meeting, as well as to the GCC General Secretariat, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, and all participants. They renewed their firm commitment and belief in Gulf unity and common destiny and affirmed their dedication to safeguarding human dignity, protecting rights and freedoms, and achieving justice and remedy for victims of the unjust aggression.