

## **Bahrain terror bill is not in line with international human rights law – UN expert**

25 July 2006 –An independent United Nations human rights expert today urged Bahrain’s Government to amend a new counter-terrorism bill, expressing concern that the law could harm human rights in the country and would be “particularly troubling” as the Kingdom is a member of the newly constituted UN Human Rights Council.

The bill, titled “Protecting Society from Terrorists Acts,” is awaiting ratification by the Head of State before becoming law, but the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Martin Scheinin, called for the legislative and executive branches to “reconsider.”

“While fully conscious of the fact that States’ obligation to protect and promote human rights requires them to take effective measures to combat terrorism, I encourage the executive and legislative branches of Government to make amendments to this bill to bring it in line with international human rights law.

“Disregarding concerns based on international human rights standards would be particularly troubling in the case of a country that is a member of the newly constituted UN Human Rights Council.”

The Special Rapporteur wrote to the Government in March and again last month, when this bill was before Parliament, identifying some issues of concern regarding the proposed legislation and he also listed these four broad areas in today’s statement.

He said he was concerned that:

- the definition of terrorism is overly broad since there is no requirement of specific aim to commit a terrorist act and some acts are deemed to be “terrorist” without the intention of causing death or serious bodily injury – thus this definition goes against several human rights instruments;
- restrictions on freedom of association and assembly would allow the criminalization of peaceful demonstrations by civil society;
- excessive limitations are being placed on freedom of speech due to the use of broad and vague terms regarding the offence of incitement to terrorism since there is not a clear threshold for criminalization established;
- rights to due process would be denied because of the excessive powers of the Public Prosecutor regarding detention without judicial review.

Mr. Scheinin and other Special Rapporteurs are independent, unpaid experts with a mandate from the Human Rights Council.