



**Bahrain
Parliamentary Group**

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Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

Discussion on the Assembly General Topic

**Overcoming the Pandemic Today and Building a Better
Tomorrow: The Role of Parliaments**

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- The pandemic has not only affected all regions and almost all countries in the areas of health care, but also the human rights matrix, whether it is economic, social, cultural, civil, or political. The pandemic has exposed the failure of humanity to support such rights, not only because of its inability to support them, but also due to its neglect or its choice not to support the protection of the rights of specific groups such as children, women, persons with disabilities and migrant workers, and thus failed to address forms of discrimination that exacerbate inequality and poverty, and as such fueling the social and economic deterioration caused by COVID-19.
- Against the backdrop of the pressures associated with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and to address it at the same time, most governments have embarked on restrictive measures, some of which are contrary to the democratic and basic rights of citizens guaranteed to them by international charters and norms, as well as national constitutions and related laws. These measures reduced democratic freedoms, and democracy seemed to be one of the victims of the pandemic. Such measures included: banning large public gatherings and preventing public protests and other measures. The purpose behind their use at times seemed to go beyond just preserving public health, to political restrictions and slogans on rights and freedoms, as well as the encroachment on privacy that is still controversial to

date. Indeed, the matter extended in some countries to delay voting in some elections.

- Many governments around the world, regardless of their political systems and their development in the practice of democracy, have used the wider circumstance created by the epidemic to expand executive power and restrict individual rights, which in turn has affected many aspects of democratic practices, and it is feared that some of such measures will turn from temporary to permanent, an issue that will cast a gloomy shadow over the future of democracy and human rights. Some countries have also observed deepening religious polarization, discrimination, persecution of women, vulnerable groups, and ethnic and religious minorities that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and have been discriminated against in enforcing closures, which blatantly contradicts the implementation and respect of human rights.
- Worsening poverty, inequality, structural and entrenched discrimination, and other shortcomings in protecting human rights have fueled the COVID-19 crisis. Only measures that fill these gaps and promote human rights guarantee a full recovery and rebuild the world in a better, more just, sustainable and resilient capacity, by including human rights at the heart of efforts to recover and rebuild the world we desire, and reaffirming the messages revealed by the

peak of the pandemic, emphasizing the need for global solidarity, and the importance of our interdependence and our common humanity as human beings.

- As the world draws a roadmap to exit from the pandemic and address its effects towards a sustainable recovery for the future, the world must learn from successes; where the pandemic has been effectively controlled in a manner that respects and fulfills democratic principles and human rights, so that one of the lessons learned from the pandemic is the launch towards more inclusive, transparent and accountable democracies, especially since the epidemic situation has already contributed to the emergence of a number of positive democratic trends and innovations, the foremost of which is the role played by prominent civil society group in responses to the pandemic, which strengthens democratic vitality at the local level.
- In certain cases, effective state responses have enhanced confidence in the government, as in the case of the Kingdom of Bahrain, where the rapid and pre-response response and preventive action on the part of the government to address the epidemic and cordon off its repercussions and effects at various levels, and the provision of treatment and vaccinations to citizens and residents alike, contributed to enhancing confidence in the government and its

ability to confront The crises without diminishing the basic rights of citizens, infringing on their freedoms, or harming the democratic practice, all of which were an example and a model to be emulated and deserves commendation.

- To build a sustainable future that respects human rights and respectful democratic norms, humankind must address inequality through fundamental social and economic improvements, whereas richer countries should help the poorer countries to survive the crisis and recover from it better, an issue that is achieved through reforming the global multilateral system, and places emphasis on the democratic character in managing global affairs. The first test in this regard is to ensure that vaccines reach everyone who needs them. Placing human rights at the heart of the pandemic response, and within the framework of recovery measures, can help build more resilient, prosperous, and inclusive societies. Parliaments should take the initiative on their part, and through their legislative and oversight tools, and through specific committees on human rights issues, to pay special attention to ensure respect for human rights and non-derogation from them, and keep them under consideration around the clock, while in the process of following up on government performance in transacting with the pandemic, and the measures to recover from it.