Speculations has arisen that the human rights situation in Bahrain will be discussed at the 24th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, set to take place in Geneva from 9 – 27 September 2013. Additionally, analysts hope the Council will discuss what progress has been made, if any, on Bahrain’s behalf to implement the Human Rights Council’s previous recommendations that were made during Bahrain’s Universal Period Review.

Bahrain Observatory for Human Rights coordinator Abdulnabi al-Ekri explained that in the public discussion session, under item 6, representatives of the member States of the Human Rights Council and international organizations are allowed to discuss human rights violations in a country.

“It is expected that the public discussion session, which begins the second week on the next term of the council, will focus on the human rights situation in Bahrain,” al-Ekri said.

Al-Ekri added that “there are a number of representatives from human rights organizations that are expected to participate in the public session, including representatives from the Bahrain Observatory for Human Rights, based on the right granted to human rights organizations to address the Council.”

The next session of the Human Rights Council marks the one-year anniversary of the discussion the 2nd report on Bahrain produced by the Universal Period Review mechanism at the United Nations.

In a joint statement to Bahrain during the 22nd Session of the Human Rights Council in February 2012, 44 UN member states recommended the Bahrain government hasten the implementation of the BICI recommendations and provided additional recommendations for the Government of Bahrain to implement.

Member nations welcomed the Bahrain government’s commitment to allow the visit of United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture Juan Mendez, a visit that was later postponed by the Bahrain government. The statement also hailed the resumption of the national dialogue on 10 February 2013, encouraging all parties to participate constructively while encouraged the government of Bahrain to continue working with all participants in the dialogue to achieve an open, democratic, and inclusive community with equal opportunities for all.

However, signatories to the statement also expressed serious concern over the human rights situation in Bahrain, stating that “we are particularly concerned regarding the continued harassment and detention of people who exercise their rights to freedom of expression and speech, including human rights defendants. We are also concerned over the availability of guarantees of fair trials for the 13 political activists whom sentences were upheld including life imprisonment in January 2013.”

Member nations continued, saying “we urge the Bahrain government to promoting the rights to freedom of assembly and association and to exercise restraint in dealing with public gatherings, as we also expect protesters to commit to peaceful protests. We are also concerned over Bahrain government’s decision to revoke the nationality of 31 Bahraini citizens, which makes many of them without nationality, in addition to the suspension and detention of medics. Finally, while we welcome establishing a special unit for private investigations, we are concerned that most of the perpetrators of human rights violations were not prosecuted or punished.”

The statement called on the government of Bahrain to address these concerns and speed up implementation of the BICI report recommendations and the recommendations accepted by Bahrain during the Universal Periodic Review.