

## **Alshayeb in Alwasatiah Forum:**

### **NSHR Report Covers Major Human Rights Issues**

On Monday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Alwasatiah Forum for Culture and Literature in Safwa, Saudi Arabia, invited Jafar Alshayeb, a human rights activist, to discuss the second annual report of the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) to be evaluated and determine its compatibility with international human rights standards.

Through his introduction to the program, Alshayeb reviewed the importance of human rights globally and their impacts on the region. He explained that human rights campaign can be used to bring about all social issues and can be a tool to measure the government's commitment to international standards.

In reviewing the report, he went over its contents and findings. The first part explores regulations and legislations related to human rights during the period covered by the report. These include Judicial law and how it is important to have levels and specializations in the judiciary system. The report reviews all these laws and criticizes some of these ambiguous articles in a way to establish more moderate and institutionalized process. The second part refers to a number of governmental bodies and institutions related to human rights to review their records during the past year in order to be fully aware of their contributions in promoting and protecting human rights. These include the Consultative Council, Ministry of Justice, and Human Rights Commission. NSHR demands to reform some of these institutions so they will be adequate in dealing with human rights concerns. The third part is entitled "Reality and Practices" which dealt with several human rights issues whether related to the rights of women, children, popular participation, freedom of expression and corruption issues.

Alshayeb explained that although the report involved many cases and concerns, it includes areas that are not directly related to human rights or not of the priority issues. He stated that although the report

showed what citizens suffer from, in general, it lacks concentration on certain fields due to the absence of different specialized human rights institutions. He indicated that if there are human rights institutions in Saudi Arabia that work in specific fields like prisoners issues and freedom of expression, issues would be addressed in a better way with more objectivity.

Alshayeb clarified that the report addressed cases in a very general style without defining the details of violations and the governmental body in charge. That language creates great confusion to the readers. Names could be coded to document facts in order to make them more credible.

Then, Alshayeb wondered about the report's ignorance to some significant human rights issues such as sectarian discrimination although Human Rights Commission as well as international human rights organizations are reporting many cases like events of Najran.

Other significant human rights issues; especially those related to public freedom, travel discharge of university professors, and long lasted immigrants issues were not well presented in the report.

The last part of the report is about thirty recommendations to the government to improve human rights conditions in Saudi Arabia.

Alshayeb praised NSHR for putting this report which tried to touch upon some of the critical human rights issues in Saudi Arabia; however, he thinks it is still far away from getting serious evaluation and monitoring to the situation.