

## The Prisons of Bahrain: Detention, Disease and Suffering



Since the beginning of the popular outbreak uprising on February 14 2011, human rights violations in Bahrain continued. These violations included the arrest of many people of different age groups and practitioners in various fields. Jurists, journalists, doctors, teachers, academics and students were arrested. The arrests also included children, women, men and the elderly (over 60), through which most of those arrested were subjected to harsh conditions of detention. According to statistics released by the State Department recently, the number of arrestees reached 4,780 of detainees and prisoners.

The deterioration of prison conditions in Bahrain is the other side of arbitrary detention. Prisoners are housed in reform institutions that do not meet the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and provide a fertile environment for torture and ill-treatment in order to make them confess. Human rights reports confirm that prisons in Bahrain are widely applied to the policy of denial of treatment in the context of "systematic revenge and healing", which has led to deterioration in the conditions of prisoners' health, especially with the prevalence of physical and psychological torture and deprivation of other basic rights. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) has received testimonies from detainees which highlights their health situation.

## **Denial of Treatment: The Most Violated Right**

From 2011 to this day, very painful and large humanitarian file was formed: the file of detainees in the prisons in Bahrain. Until this moment, the prison administration still neglect treatment of the wounded and sick, keep them in prisons, and do not take in consideration their rights and health conditions. Some of the symbols suffered deterioration in their health condition and were prevented from treatment such as the great rights activist Nabeel Rajab, Dr. Al-Sankiss, Professor Hassan Mushaima, Professor Abdul Wahab Hussein, Sheikh Mirza Al-Mahrous, Abdul-Jalil Muqdad, Habib Al-Muqdad, Abdulhadi Al-Mukhouder, as well as Nurse Ibrahim Al-Dimastani and Hassan Maatouk. The archives of human rights organizations also contain painful files and testimonies of detainees who have been subjected to severe physical and mental torture and their health condition are at risk.

## **Nabeel Rajab Defending for the Detainees Rights Until He Became One of Them**



Nabeel Rajab is the President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Founding Director North Africa Division of Human Rights Watch. In July 2002, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) was founded by his colleague Abdul Hadi Al-Khawaja, who is serving a life sentence for his human rights and political activities.

Rajab is considered one of the most prominent defenders of human rights in the Arab countries. He was a prominent voice during the Arab spring revolutions in Bahrain. He has been repeatedly arrested, detained and denied travel because of his activity, and has been sentenced to imprisonment in several cases related to his human rights activities and freedom of expression.

The fifty-four years old Rajab has been in prison several times and faced many charges, all related to his work in the field of human rights and speaking about the situation in his country, Bahrain. Despite the court's decision to release him in

December 2016, Rajab remained in detention regardless of his health problems and many cases of hospitalization during his imprisonment. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) confirmed that Rajab's health is deteriorating as a result of lack of proper medical care and prevention of hospital treatment.

Soumaya Rajab, Nabil's wife, confirmed that he suffered from severe back pain that he was even sometimes unable to move and his requests to be taken to hospital for examination by a specialist doctor were refused. Instead, he received a pain relief tablet and instructions from the authorities to do exercises. PCHR pointed out that Rajab is currently isolated from the rest of the political prisoners and placed in a cell with non-Arabic speakers. It should be noted that the denial of appropriate medical treatment for Rajab is an act of open retaliation against the human rights defender.

### **Al-Sankiss: A university doctor despite the disability**



Dr. Abduljalil Al-Sankiss is a prominent Bahraini professor who served as Head of Mechanical Engineering at the Engineering Faculty of Bahrain University. Despite his disability (poliomyelitis, because of which he can only walk by wheelchairs and recently in a wheelchair), Al-Sankiss had overcome it, and qualified to be a university professor involved in many complex scientific disciplines.

In addition, he is a member of Stanford University in the Center for the Development of Democracy and the Rule of Law and has been described by the university as "an advocate of democracy, development and the rule of law in Bahrain" for 15 years. However, Dr. Al-Sankiss was tortured before being convicted by a military court for using his right of expression.

Dr. Al-Sankiss is serving his 56th birthday in prison, the sixth of which he has been going through since he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Dr. Al-Sankiss suffers from a number of serious health problems, including post-polio syndrome and sickle cell anemia, which the Government of Bahrain has refused to treat while

in detention. It is difficult for him to move easily, and he is prone to slip and fall on his unstable crutches.

In addition, Dr. Al-Sankiss and the other detainees at the central prison in Bahrain faced increasing harassment, including repeated frequent searches, and resulted in the confiscation of almost all personal belongings. All books, papers and pens were confiscated from Dr. Al-Sankiss, including the only manuscript of a book he had begun to write while in detention. They refused his request to buy rubber pads required for his macules and the medication needed to regulate and stabilize the volatile white blood cells and potassium levels was not provided.

### **Elias Faisal Al Mulla: A Model for the Arrest of Young People in Bahrain**

Al Mulla is a young man born in 1991, arrested by the Bahraini security forces on May 11, 2012 after raiding his family home without presenting any official arrest warrant. Elias was taken to the General Directorate of Criminal Investigation, where he later reported to his family that he was subjected to psychological and physical torture. On 5 May 2013 he was sentenced to 15 years in prison after several charges, including the attempt to kill of a member of the security forces and the burning of a security patrol.

In May 2015, Elias began complaining of severe pain in his abdomen until he was taken to the military hospital on first of August 2015 and was diagnosed with a third stage of colon cancer, but returned to prison few days later, where he suffered from continuous vomiting . On August 12, 2015, the doctor who was treating Elias' mother reported that her son had cancer and had to undergo chemotherapy.



According to the testimony of Elias Al Mulla's mother, on 16 October 2017, she received a call from him telling her that the prison administration refused to transfer the stool samples for analysis to ensure that the tumor has not returned. On 10 September 2017 he was also prevented from taking medicines that had been prescribed in advance.

His mother also began to notice the symptoms of his disease like swelling and pain in the right side of the upper abdomen, joints, his back and stomach, and suffers



from severe diarrhea since 9 July 2017 and is forced to refrain from eating most of the time. In addition to this, he suffers from shortness of vision, nausea, constant dizziness and blood clotting behind the ankles. All these symptoms and pains prevent him from sleeping and taking physical comfort, but the prison administration and the hospital refused to deliver any medical report concerning his health. Mullah's health is deteriorating and his family fears that his cancer will reach the fourth stage and that he may be at risk of losing his life because of inadequate medical care.

### **Hassan Mushaima: Another victim of neglecting detainee treatment**



He is a Bahraini Shiite opposition leader and leader of the opposition movement Haq, which was described by the government as "militant". He was accused in absentia in 2010 on charges of trying to topple the regime. The Mushaima family has expressed concern about any serious health relapse due to the health negligence in the central prison in Bahrain. He suffers from a high level of sugar in his body because of the prison administration refusal to dispense the necessary medication needed on a daily basis.

The family also complained that the professor was deprived of treatment in general, including a review of the clinic inside the prison. He was suffering from a number of diseases and was subjected to cancer treatment that he suffered from several years before his last arrest in March 2011. Medical examinations are required, and he needs to perform this check periodically every 6 months which the prison administration denies to do so .

### **The suffering of Ahmed Mirza**

A 33-year-old Bahraini young man faces verdict of ten years in jail. His family reported to the Bahrain Center for Human Rights that Ahmed told her on 7 May

2017 that the prison authorities did not provide him with the medicines he needed, as he had sickle cell anemia and had severe seizures.



Ahmed's family says that he needs surgery to remove the gall bladder that was supposed to have been done since 2016, but the prison administration did not take him to hospital on schedule. His family also complained that her son's health was steadily deteriorating. Bile in his body reached 985 and the normal ratio was only 21, which affected other parts of his body such as liver and spleen.

Mirza reports that despite his letters to the prison authorities to take him to hospital on time, they do not respond to these letters. Mirza is still suffering from severe and worsening pain without any response to his treatment.

### **Prisons Law and the right to health care**

The United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials of 1979's article VI of Protection of the Health of Detainees states that law enforcement officials shall ensure the full protection of the health of persons in their custody and, in particular, take immediate measures to provide medical attention to them that it is necessary. Although the list of prisoners' rights on the walls of the prison contains an item for the right of detainees in health care, the prison administration ignores this and considers neglecting the health needs of detainees. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights considers these practices as direct contravention of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, in particular rule 22 on the treatment of prisoners and medical services, and in violation of article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which affirms the right to the highest attainable standard of health care Under local conditions.

Based on this, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) calls upon the Bahraini authorities and official bodies concerned with prisoner affairs, such as the Prisoners' Rights Commission, to:

- Adherence to the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, in particular regarding treatment and medical services
- Ensure that prisoners' rights are respected
- Allow Red Crescent access to prisons and attention to patients