

NO RIGHT TO RIGHTS



A report into human rights violations committed by **BAHRAINI** authorities

- 2017 -



THANKS AND DEDICATION

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights would like to express its deep gratitude to all the local and international organizations that support the rights of the Bahraini people, and especially to **the National Endowment for Democracy**, which provides overarching logistical support to the activities of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights.

ABOUT US

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights is a non-profit, non-governmental organization founded in 2002, and registered with the Bahraini Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs in the same year. The Center was officially shut down in 2004 following the arrest of its executive head, Abdel Hadi al-Khawaja, in relation to a conference he had organized focusing on poverty in Bahrain. Since 2011, Khawaja has been serving a life sentence relating to his human rights activities. The Center's acting head, Nabeel Rajab, is also currently in prison, with both of them prevented from exercising their right to freedom of expression and from using social media. The headquarters of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights has remained closed to the public since 2007 by order of the government.

Despite constant attempts to put pressure on the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, including by imprisoning its members, the organization remains one of the most important rights groups in Bahrain, and has international credibility. Thanks to its ongoing work to strengthen the human rights situation in Bahrain, it has been able to attract support and respect within the country and beyond.

As members of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, our goal is to build a thriving, democratic society based on the values of justice and freedom. We want to live in a society that is free of discrimination and human rights abuses. We empower and advocate alongside individuals and communities to encourage them to become pioneers in fighting for human rights not just for their own communities but for others, too, based on knowledge of international human rights standards, covenants and conventions. The Center's work also focuses on strengthening public freedom and civil, political and economic rights, fighting against discrimination in all its forms and providing support and protection to victims of human rights abuses, as well as vulnerable communities.

To find out more about the activities of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and read some of our previous reports and publications, please visit our website at:

www.bahrainrights.org

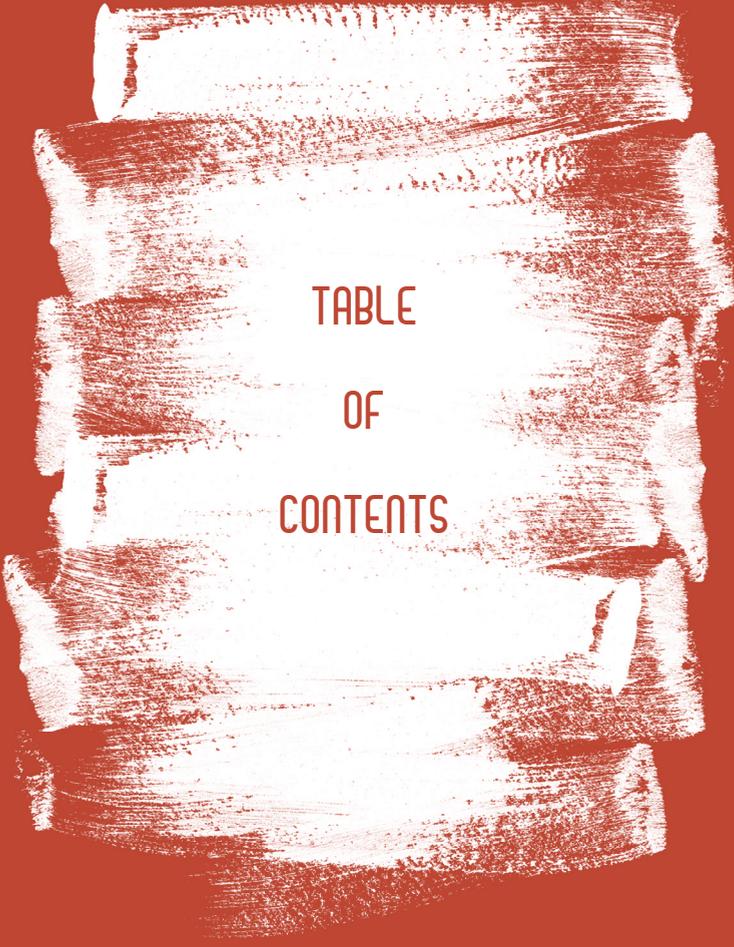


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The most recent constitution of Bahrain defines it as a constitutional monarchy. The King is responsible for appointing the Prime Minister – the current incumbent has been in the position since 1971. Citizens of Bahrain have no power to change the Prime Minister. The King also has power to appoint government ministers and 50% of the National Council, as well as the country's judiciary. This situation led the people of Bahrain to take direct action in 2011, organizing a large sit-in around the Pearl Roundabout, with the aim of strengthening their rights. However, authorities used excessive force to end the sit-in, leading to several deaths and significant numbers of injuries. Since that time, and up until the point of writing, authorities have continued to violate the human rights of Bahraini citizens.

Over the course of 2017 (between January and December, to be precise), the number of politically-motivated detentions increased, as did reports of torture and ill treatment carried out in order to force confessions during interrogations. Moreover, political and social media activists continued to be targeted, both by the security forces and by the judiciary. Human rights defenders have also been targeted. Politically-motivated court cases were pursued in a manner falling far short of the minimum basic standards for fair trials as stipulated by international law. This is not to mention the fact that civilians have been tried in military courts.

Authorities have also employed anti-terror laws against opposition activists and peaceful protesters. The UN¹ and a host of other international organizations² have called for these laws to be revised, since their broad-based and vague clauses violate standards of human rights and fair trial. There have been widespread restrictions on civil, religious and political freedoms, and violations on the right to privacy. What's more, a number of opposition activists and Shia religious clerics have had their citizenship revoked, with several subsequently being deported.

The report that follows is a summary of the human rights violations documented by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights over the course of 2017. A number of other violations were reported, but it has not been possible to verify them due to fear

1. <http://bchr.hopto.org/BCHR/wp-content/uploads/201010//Bahrain-law-on-counter-terrorism-UN-Expert.pdf>

2. <http://bchr.hopto.org/en/node/3449>

on the part of victims, who have been unwilling to share their testimonies. The volume of violations reported during 2017 also meant that it was beyond the capacity of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights to investigate all of them.

RESTRICTIONS ON THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION

The most recent constitution of Bahrain defines it as a constitutional monarchy. The King is responsible for appointing the Prime Minister – the current incumbent has been in the position since 1971. Citizens of Bahrain have no power to change the Prime Minister. The King also has power to appoint government ministers and 50% of the National Council, as well as the country's judiciary. This situation led the people of Bahrain to take direct action in 2011, organizing a large sit-in around the Pearl Roundabout, with the aim of strengthening their rights. However, authorities used excessive force to end the sit-in, leading to several deaths and significant numbers of injuries. Since that time, and up until the point of writing, authorities have continued to violate the human rights of Bahraini citizens.

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is the right to express one's thoughts and opinions in writing, speech or art, in total freedom and without oversight or restriction. This is usually a corollary to other kinds of rights, such as the right to freedom of worship, freedom of the press and the freedom to take part in peaceful demonstrations. Freedom of opinion and expression is considered a fundamental right, and is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As such, the state of freedom of opinion and expression in a certain country can be considered a marker of the quality of democracy enjoyed in said country.

In Bahrain, authorities violated this right on a number of occasions over the course of 2017. Peaceful demonstrations have been prohibited, and activists as well as ordinary citizens have been subject to arbitrary arrest. Police officials also used excessive force during protests in Shia villages in order to restrict inhabitants' right to worship. Furthermore, the Bahraini newspaper al-Wasat, which was previously considered the country's sole independent newspaper, was also shut down.

AFTER 6 YEARS OF PROTEST,

THE PEOPLE OF BAHRAIN STILL HAVE NOT WON THEIR RIGHT TO PEACEFUL PROTEST

A large number of small protest marches took place in various parts of Bahrain during 2017, of which the

Bahrain Center for Human Rights was able to document 2817. Of these, 8.25% were dispersed using tear gas, and in some cases using live ammunition known locally as birdshot. The use of such ammunition during peaceful demonstrations left 45 people injured during 2017, with those affected sustaining injuries ranging from light to medium. Furthermore, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights estimates that the real number of injuries was far greater, since many victims are unwilling to come forward and testify to having been injured for fear of being targeted by security forces in the future.

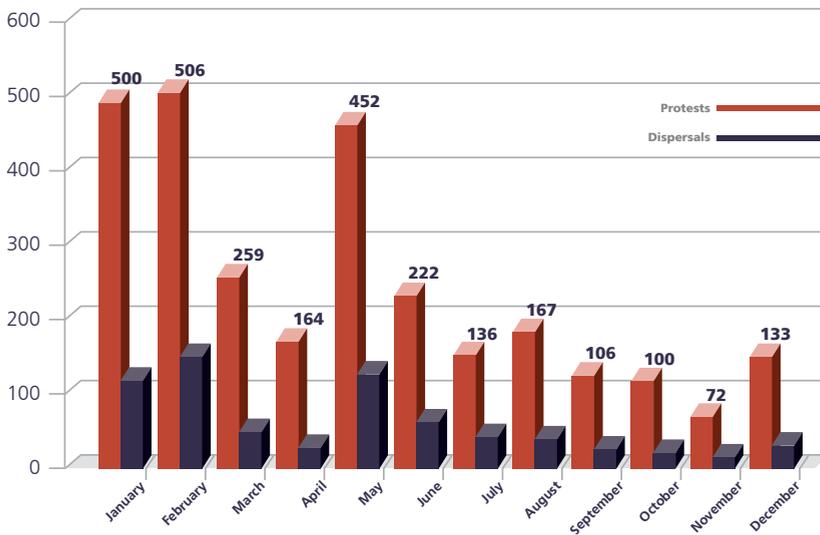
“ **THE RIGHT OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY SHALL BE RECOGNIZED** ”

Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights





Security forces use tear gas to disperse peaceful demonstrators.



The diagram above shows that the month of February 2017 saw the highest number of protests, which is explained by the fact that February marks the anniversary of the start of the Pearl Roundabout demonstrations in 2011. As the table shows, 506 peaceful marches took place in that month, 4.3% of which were dispersed using birdshot and tear gas, leading to 3 injuries (all as a result of birdshot).

May 2017 saw the third-highest number of peaceful protests, a response to a judgement issued that month against the prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Issa Qassim, who was given a suspended sentence of a year. In the days following the judgement, the Ministry of Interior carried out a security operation to disperse peaceful demonstrators who had gathered outside Qassim's house. The violent dispersal of the crowds left five protesters dead, all of them from the group that had been surrounding the house of Sheikh Issa Qassim. 34 protesters also sustained birdshot wounds.





ARBITRARY ARRESTS:

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017

Over the course of 2017, security forces arrested 1442 citizens, including 134 minors under the age of 18 and 27 women. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights has learned that, of the total number of people arrested, 370 people were later released. 91.6% of the total arrests were carried out arbitrarily, that is, through illegal house raids at dawn during which arrestees and their families were not informed of the reason for the arrest, nor permitted to see arrest or search warrants. Individuals have also been arbitrarily arrested in the street, at their places of work or at air and sea ports.

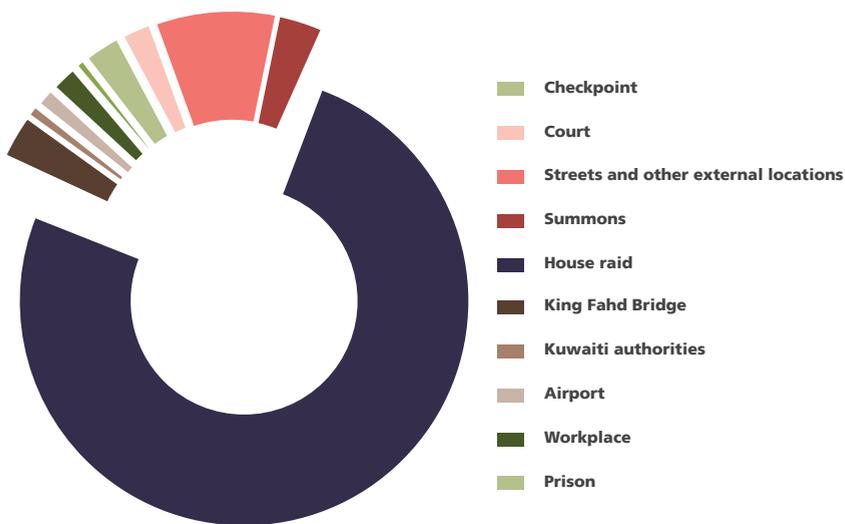


Diagram showing arrest methods employed during 2017

“ NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED TO ARBITRARY ARREST OR DETENTION ”

Article 9 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights

May 2017 saw the highest number of arrests; 26.9% of the total arrests during 2017 took place during May, equal to 389 individuals. September, on the other hand, had the lowest rate at 2.8%, or 41 individuals. In the wake of the security operation launched by police in May to disperse protesters from around the house of the Shia leader Sheikh Issa Qassim, security forces arbitrarily arrested over 200

people during house raids, without obtaining arrest or search warrants. The Ministry of Interior argued that it had been forced to take such action because legal irregularities were damaging the interests of the citizenry, and putting them at risk. The Ministry of Interior also published a Tweet claiming that it had intervened "after the site became a safe haven for wanted criminals and those fleeing justice."¹

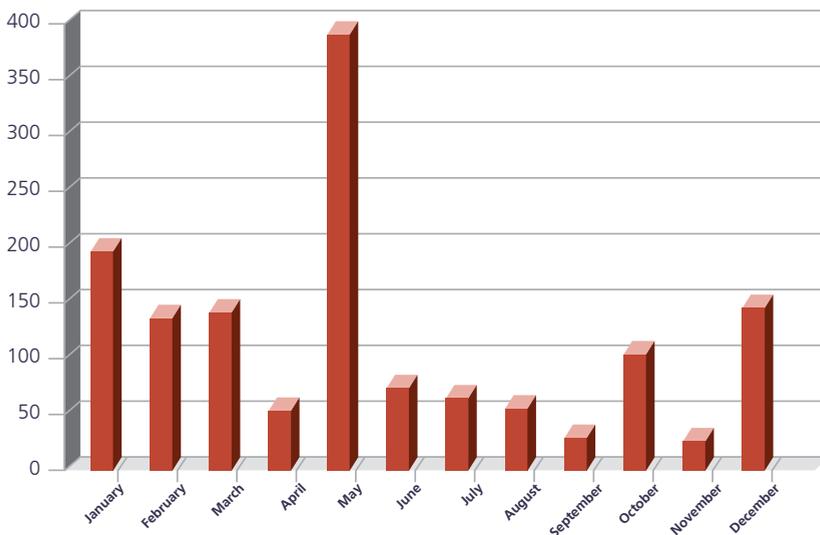


Diagram showing the number of people arrested per month during 2017

The political situation in Bahrain over the course of 2017 saw the number of arrests rise by 9.9% on the previous year's figures. According to a count by the Bahrain Center's for Human Rights, a total of 1312 people were arrested during 2016, including 19 women and 187 minors under the age of 18.

1. <https://www.bna.bh/portal/news/787259>

ATTACKS ON RELIGIOUS PROTESTS

DURING ASHURA

Beginning from 13 September 2017, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights documented several instances of police officials removing banners and religious signage related to the season of Muharram in as many as 21 areas of Shia-majority parts of Bahrain.

Police also used excessive force to quell protests against the removal of this religious signage, firing tear gas and birdshot. This took place in the regions of al-Muamir and al-Musali, with around 12 arrests.

Further, the Ministry of Interior summoned at least 5 officials in relation to religious imagery and signage put up to celebrate Muharram. Additionally, the religious leader Abdel Amir al-Biladi was arrested, and two others were issued with summons over poems they recited. Two other clerics were issued with summons in connection with sermons they delivered.

" EVERYONE SHALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION AND TO MANIFEST HIS RELIGION OR BELIEF IN WORSHIP, OBSERVANCE, PRACTICE AND TEACHING "

Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

THE CLOSURE OF THE AL-WASAT NEWSPAPER:

A CLEAR ATTACK ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

On 4 June 2017, authorities shut down the al-Wasat newspaper without prior warning, and without specifying a date on which it could reopen. Al-Wasat is considered the only independent newspaper in Bahrain. The publication had already been subject to a number of restrictions; in 2010, it was banned from audio broadcasting and from publishing articles on its own website. Then, in April 2011, it was shut down during a wave of repression that followed the outbreak of widespread public protests on 14 February 2011. In 2015 the newspaper was shut down for a second time, on this occasion for a period of 2 days. In January 2016, the Ministry of Interior banned the newspaper from using social media, and then banned it for a short time from publishing anything on the internet.

" EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION; THIS RIGHT INCLUDES FREEDOM TO SEEK, RECEIVE AND IMPART INFORMATION AND IDEAS THROUGH ANY MEDIA AND REGARDLESS OF FRONTIERS. "

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

During 2017 foreign journalists were prevented from entering the country to cover public events. The government also accused Naziha Saeed, a correspondent with France 24 and

RadioMonteCarlo, of working without the proper permission, after refusing her request to renew her press permit.

Human Rights Watch has criticized the government's decision to close the al-Wasat newspaper, warning that it represents a violation of the right to freedom of expression. The move also appears to violate Article 28 of the Bahraini Law of the Press of 2002 – Decree 47 of 2002 – which stipulates that courts are responsible for issuing orders for publications to cease publication or shut down¹.



| Archive image shows the al-Wasat newspaper

1. <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2017305244/18/06/>

CRIMINALIZATION OF NON-VIOLENT ACTION AND THE TARGETING OF ACTIVISTS

The ability to participate in non-violent political action is an indicator of the level and quality of rights which citizens are able to enjoy, and which the government guarantees to them. Over the course of 2017, the government of Bahrain took a number of repressive measures against civil society organizations and targeted individuals for exercising their legal rights. Several opposition political organizations were shut down, and activists were tortured or forbidden from leaving the country. One of the most prominent of these is Nabeel Rajab, the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, who received a harsh judicial sentence in retaliation for his impactful work to defend and promote human rights.

CLOSURE OF OPPOSITION POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

On 17 June 2017 the Supreme Civil Court issued a judgement closing the al-Wefaq national Islamic organization and ordering its financial accounts to be dissolved.¹ It had already been ordered to cease its activities immediately and close its headquarters, and its accounts had been frozen. These steps were taken after the head of the organization was accused of involvement in activities contrary to the principles of the rule of law, and of providing a safe haven for terrorism, extremism and violence. Furthermore, he was accused of allowing foreign agents to influence the country.

“ EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION ”

Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

On 26 October 2017 the Second High Court of Cassation issued a judgement backing the decision to dissolve a second organization, National Democratic Labor (Waad), and ordering its financial resources to be handed over to the state.² The organization had been accused of committing grave violations; it had been active in supporting three men who were sentenced to death after being charged with killing 3 police officers in an attack, and also supported

1. <http://www.bna.bh/portal/news/736172#.WticpInBnSo.twitter>

2. <http://www.bna.bh/portal/news/807950#.WtidMYRRGMA.twitter>

the al-Wefaq organization. The court considered this latter action a violation of Article 4, Paragraph 7 of the Law of Organizations, which forbids cooperation with any political body that goes against the principles, rules or regulations set out in the constitution, or against the founding principles of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

ACTIVISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

DEFENDERS DENIED FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights has documented 29 cases in which human rights activists, lawyers and members of political organizations were prevented from travelling during 2017. Many travel restrictions coincided with the start of the annual Human Rights Council session in the Swiss city of Geneva. These travel restrictions were imposed for several months, without justification; the only explanation offered was that victims were facing unlawful assembly charges in Bahraini courts, in cases based on the testimony of police officers unknown to the activists. Among the individuals affected by travel bans were 3 members of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights: Nadal al-Salman, head of public relations and women's issues; Inas Aun, head of the investigation and documentation department; and Hussein Radha, a member of the investigation and documentation department. The latter was banned from travel for a period of 10 months, until long after travel bans imposed on other activists had been lifted.

On 16 October 2017 human rights activist Zainab Khamis reported that she had been prevented from travelling through Bahrain International Airport¹, despite having taken all the necessary steps to lift the ban previously imposed against her on 30 August. Zainab says she has now been banned from travel on four separate occasions, at different times of the year, and considers the restrictions imposed on her to be a violation of international conventions that enshrine the right to freedom of movement.

While travel bans imposed on other activists were subsequently lifted, activist Fatima al-Halwaji has remained forbidden from travelling. Authorities say this is because there is an unlawful assembly case against her that is being tried under anti-terror laws. However, she has not been supplied with any further information regarding this case.

Activists subject to travel bans do not receive any official summons, and are not informed ahead of time of the restrictions imposed on them. Although the government has established a web page relating to travel bans, activists subject to restrictions are unaware until they arrive at air or sea ports intending to travel. Activists affected by travel restrictions report that the aforementioned web page contains no information relating to bans issued against them.

1. <https://twitter.com/bahrainrights/status/920218154391031808>

BAHRAIN'S SECURITY APPARATUS

AND THE TORTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

The Bahraini government has stepped up its repression of human rights activists, including employing torture methods in order to stop them carrying out their activities. On 26 May 2017, human rights activist Ibtisam al-Sayigh attended the National Security Agency building in al-Mahriq after receiving an official summons. Ibtisam reports that she was beaten all over her body over the course of seven hours. She was kicked in the head and the stomach, and subjected to verbal sexual abuse by interrogators, who threatened to rape her if she did not suspend her human rights activities. Ibtisam was blindfolded and made to stand throughout the duration of the interrogation. Interrogators from the National Security Agency also used psychological torture methods against her, threatening to target her husband and children, and pressuring her to announce on her public Twitter account that she was stopping her human rights work and stepping down from her position at the al-Salaam organization.¹

Similar summons have been issued to a number of human rights activists, bloggers and political figures. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights has been able to document 11 such cases, but there are many other victims who have been unwilling to come forward and

1. <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/ar/case/ibtisam-al-saegh-tortured-and-sexually-assaulted>

talk about what happened when they were summoned, and what took place in the interrogation room, for fear of suffering further violations and torture in retaliation for speaking out.

" NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED TO TORTURE OR TO CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT. "

Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

One of those who was summoned was an official from the al-Wahdawi organization specializing in investigations and documentation, Adil al-Mazrouq. Mohammed al-Shakhouri and Riza al-Qatari, both members of the al-Wefaq organization, were also summoned, as well as Jalil Youssef, head of the Bahraini Organization for Human Rights. Also affected were blogger Hassan al-Sharqi, who in fact ceased publication following his summoning, and Youssef al-Jamri, who has raised a legal case over the torture he suffered.¹

Lawyer Ibrahim Sarhan left the country immediately following his interrogation. Others who requested anonymity have also reported being affected.

1. <http://www.manamapost.com/news.php?name=2017051616>

HEAD OF THE BAHRAIN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS PAYS THE PRICE FOR HIS PEACEFUL ACTIVISM



In early 2017, activist and head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab was arrested in a case connected with freedom of opinion and expression. On 23 January 2017 Rajab faced a court session over two linked charges, the first of which related his criticism of a particular television channel. The second was over a Tweet about the war in Yemen and events in al-Jaw Prison.

On 5 April 2017 Rajab underwent surgery, and his relatives were prevented from visiting him. He was transferred back to prison immediately following the operation. Three days later he was transferred back to hospital after his health condition deteriorated. On 21 June, Rajab's family reported that he had not been permitted to receive visits

from relatives and lawyers, and had been pressured into returning to maximum security prison. On 10 July Nabeel Rajab was handed a two-year sentence for spreading false news with the aim of destabilizing the country, by way of his criticism of the television channel.

On 26 October 2017 Nabeel Rajab was mistreated after being transferred from the prison hospital to his cell in al-Jaw Prison. His hair was shaved, and he was subjected to humiliating treatment. On 19 November Rajab's court session was postponed due to an administrative error. Since that date, and up until the writing of this report, Rajab remains in prison, serving a 7-year sentence for a number of charges all linked to freedom of opinion and expression.

**" I GO TO PRISON WITH MY HEAD HELD HIGH,
MY WILL STRONG AND MY BACK STRAIGHT,
BECAUSE I KNOW I HAVE WITH ME
THE FREE, NOBLE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE "**

Nabeel Rajab – Head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights

A POLITICIZED JUDICIARY AND THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

A fair judiciary is one of the cornerstones of a stable state. The judicial system is responsible for providing checks and balances and for safeguarding the rights of litigants, as stipulated by international law. A fair justice system will seek to uphold the rights of individuals whatever their status, not side with power and authority.

In the majority of cases linked to politically-sensitive issues in Bahrain, the judiciary has violated the standards for fair trials. In a number of cases, extremely punitive sentences have been handed down despite the lack of material evidence linking the accused to the crime at issue. Guilty sentences have also been handed down based on secret sources and confessions extorted under physical or psychological torture. The revocation of Bahraini citizenship has also been used against opposition activists, rendering them unable to campaign for political change.

3 MEN EXECUTED AND SEVERAL MORE

SENTENCED TO DEATH, DESPITE REPORTS OF TORTURE

On the morning of Sunday 15 January 2017,¹ authorities executed three victims of torture. Ali al-Sankis, Abbas al-Samia and Sami Mushaymaa had all been accused of attacking police forces in al-Dih on 3 March 2014. The bombing attack resulted in the deaths of three officers: the Emirati First Lieutenant Tariq Mohammed al-Shahhi and officers Mohammed Ruslan and Ammar Abdu Ali Mohammed. The death sentences against the three men were carried out without the knowledge of their relatives or lawyers. In addition to this, Bahraini courts confirmed 15 death sentences over the course of 2017, of a total of 22 such sentences originally issued during the year.



| **Image shows the clothes in which the men were executed**

1. <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1201213.html>

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights has learned that the three men executed in January told relatives they had been subjected to grave physical and psychological torture, and were forced to sign the confessions attributed to them. After the death sentences were carried out the men's effects were returned to their families, including the clothes in which they had been executed, with holes from the three bullets which had been fired at each one of them.

In the last week of 2017, a military court sentenced 6 civilians to death for forming a terrorist cell, attempting to assassinate the head of the Bahraini defense force, and a number of other terrorist offences.¹ The men convicted in this case had been subject to forced disappearance for 6 months after they were arrested by civil forces from the National Security Agency. They were not permitted to contact their relatives or lawyers for several months, and were not able to receive visits from their families until after the sentence was passed against them on 25 December 2017.

Investigations by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights have shown that one of the men, Fadhil Abbas, was arrested arbitrarily by civil forces and taken to an unknown location before being transferred – 6 months later – to the Qarin Prison, a prison supposedly for military personnel. Fadhil has informed relatives that he was tortured,

1. <https://www.bna.bh/portal/news/817991>

subjected to electric shocks and hung up, and was kept blindfolded throughout the period of his detention. Due to this, he had no idea where he was, and was not able to see his torturers. Another man convicted in the case, Alawi Hussein, was an engineer at a communications company, and was arrested from his place of work before being subjected to the same treatment described by Fadhil Abbas.¹

On 23 October 2017 the military court held the first session in this case. When the detainees arrived they showed clear signs of torture and physical exhaustion, according to those who attended the session. The session lasted no more than 5 minutes, with the judge refusing to listen to the defendants' testimony or their reports of mistreatment. This is the first time a military court is trying civilians in a case related to crimes classified as **"terrorist"**. It is being heard in the first court to be established after the constitution was amended² to give military judges the power to adjudicate civil cases, including cases of a political nature. As the Bahrain Center for Human Rights has previously stated, this constitutional amendment is a clear violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and especially of its prohibition against trying civilians in military courts unless all possible legal provisions are made available.

1. http://bchr.myftp.org/sites/default/files/pdf_0.pdf

2. <https://www.bna.bh/portal/news/781428>

Commenting on the use of military courts to try civilians, Amnesty International said that amending the constitution in this way would have a catastrophic impact on the future of trials in Bahrain, and the judicial system in general.¹ Amnesty also pointed out that the move echoes procedures put in place during the state of emergency declared following mass protests in 2011, when military courts were used to suppress opposition.



The son of Alawi Hussein, one of the detainees

1. <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/latest/news/201704//bahrain-disastrous-move-towards-patently-unfair-military-trials-of-civilians/>

CITIZENS DEPORTED

AFTER HAVING THEIR CITIZENSHIP REVOKED

The government of Bahrain has used citizenship as a tool to punish activists and political opponents. Civil society activists, human rights defenders, journalists, opposition figures and religious clerics have been subject to this measure. Most have been rendered stateless, and left no legal rights in Bahrain – they are unable to work legally, own property or even access healthcare.

Between 2012 and 2017, the Bahraini government revoked the citizenship of 449 people. In 2012, this included issuing an administrative order to revoke the citizenship of 31 people without investigation or trial, and without sufficient justification. In 2014 a court revoked the citizenship of 21 people after they were found guilty of various offences, following trials that fell short of the standards of fairness and objectivity. The majority of the defendants reported having been subjected to torture to force them to confess to crimes of which they were entirely innocent. However, the largest single revocation of citizenship followed an administrative order in 2015, with 72 people stripped of their citizenship. Later that same year, the government revoked the citizenship of 136 people by way of a court order, on the basis of various politically-motivated cases. Over the course of 2016, 33 people had their citizenship revoked, among them several minors under the age of 18.

Several of those were ejected from the country. In 2017, 156 people had their citizenship stripped after being detained over cases of a political nature.

During 2017, 3 of those whose citizenship was revoked were later deported. On 20 July 2017, authorities deported Madiha Maki Ibrahim Jabil (40) to Iran without legal justification. Madiha is the wife of an opposition Shia religious scholar who has lived in Iran since deciding to leave Bahrain, for fear of being targeted due to his political activities. Detailing her deportation, Madiha said she had returned to Bahrain on 19 July 2017, but was stopped at Bahrain International Airport by the National Security Agency. She was interrogated about her husband's activities, and asked to help security forces spy on him. She was then released, but was summoned the following day to confirm that she was prepared to collaborate with security forces. When she informed officials of her decision to refuse, she was detained for over 5 hours, after which she was transferred to Bahrain International Airport. There, she was informed that her Bahraini citizenship had been revoked, and that she was henceforth prohibited from entering the country.

On 31 October of the same year, authorities deported the blogger Ibrahim Karimi, who had previously spent 25 months in prison after being convicted of defaming the King of Bahrain in a Tweet.



Ibrahim Karimi pictured on the plane following the decision to deport him

Karimi's citizenship had been revoked in 2012 by way of an administrative order issued by the Ministry of Interior. Karimi was transferred from al-Jaw Prison, where he served his sentence, to a holding prison in the Department of Citizenship and Passports, where a decision was issued to deport him from Bahrain immediately.

The right to a nationality is fundamental, and is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as in the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, to which Bahrain is a signatory. The Bahraini government's violation of this right is a grave breach of its human rights obligations under international law, especially since the children of individuals stripped of their citizenship are prevented from enjoying the benefits that the government provides to citizens, such as housing benefit, cost-of-living allowances and subsidies on some consumer products.

THE CODIFICATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

As an organization we believe strong rules are necessary to govern our work and its administration, and we believe the same when it comes to the functioning of our state. Clear laws should lay out boundaries for the state and the lives of its citizens, so long as said laws do not have a negative impact on the rights enjoyed in public life. Over the course of 2017, a number of laws and decrees were promulgated whose contents, in fact, violate basic human rights enshrined in instruments of international law to which Bahrain is a signatory.

- On 5 January 2017 a royal decree was issued that gave the National Security Agency powers of detention.¹ In 2011 a large number of grave human rights violations were committed by members of the National Security Agency, and were acknowledged in a report by an independent fact-finding council. At that time the National Security Agency – according to the report – arbitrarily arrested 179 people in unlawful and systematic house raids. During these raids officials from the National Security Agency physically and psychologically mistreated arrestees, in several cases to the point of torture. The council's report also detailed the case of Abdel Karim Fakhrawi, businessman and founder of the al-Wasat newspaper, who died on 11 April 2011 due to torture at the hands of National Security Agency officials.
- On 16 January 2017 the Ministry for Media Affairs passed a decree prohibiting the al-Wasat newspaper from publishing online. A subsequent decree passed on 4 June prohibited it from publishing at all, a decision that must be considered a grave violation of the freedom of the press.
- On 6 March 2017 the Minister of Justice raised a claim against the al-Waad organization, in preparation for dissolving it. On 31 May 2017 the Ministry of Interior issued a further decree ordering the closure of al-Waad's headquarters, while the organization was (and in fact

1. <http://bna.bh/portal/news/764485?date=2017-06->

still remains) subject to a judicial case. The organization's members and human rights activists have denounced this action as a violation of the right to form organizations.

- On 18 April 2017 the King passed an amendment to the constitution giving military judges the right to try civilian defendants.¹ Amnesty International has described this constitutional amendment as "catastrophic" for the future of the judiciary and fair trials in Bahrain, warning that it could leave civilians at risk of being subject to "unfair military trials," with the possibility of closed trials or defendants facing trial without legal representation.² The contents of this amendment violate the right to a fair trial. On 2 November 2017, the fears of human rights organizations were realized when a court order was issued to prohibit the publication of news or information about one of the cases being heard before a military court, specifically that known as the Marshal Assassination Case.
- On 23 May 2017 the Minister of Interior issued a decree ordering the dispersal of the sit-in that had formed around the house of Sheikh Issa Ahmed Qassim, a prominent Shia leader in the region of al-Diraz.³ This is considered a clear violation of the right to peaceful assembly.

1. <https://www.bna.bh/portal/news/781428>

2. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/201704//bahrain-disastrous-move-towards-patently-unfair-military-trials-of-civilians/>

3. <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1243674.html>

- On 7 June 2017 a law was issued that strips the pension rights of those who have had their citizenship revoked. This is despite the fact that many of those whose citizenship is revoked have previously worked in Bahrain long enough to enjoy full pension rights alongside other citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Human rights – including civil and political rights – are indivisible, be that the right to life, the right to equality before the law or the right to freedom of expression. The government of Bahrain has committed clear violations of these rights, and has even condoned and codified such rights abuses. In this context, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights calls on the government of Bahrain to do the following:

1. Release all political prisoners and human rights defenders, and search for a mechanism of dialogue with opposition forces. This may provide

a way out of the political crisis that represents the root cause of the human rights violations committed in Bahrain over the course of 2017, as well as in previous years.

2. Stop utilizing anti-terror laws until they are reviewed and amended to bring them into line with international human rights standards, as the UN has previously demanded. The government must also cease utilizing laws and regulations designed to fight terrorism against peaceful opposition figures and human rights activists.
3. Stop promulgating laws that contravene international human rights standards, and amend those that have already been brought into force to ensure they comply with the stipulations of international human rights agreements and conventions, especially those to which Bahrain is a signatory.
4. End systematic torture immediately, and put an end to the culture of impunity by punishing those responsible. The government must also allow the UN Rapporteur on Torture to visit Bahrain as soon as possible.
5. Guarantee freedom of opinion and expression for those who criticize authorities or peacefully oppose government policy, and act to ensure they are protected. The government must also cease promulgating laws that violate freedom of expression and the press, and revoke those that are already in force.

6. Stop targeting human rights activists, and seek to foster a healthy environment in which they can carry out their work, including allowing them to establish independent organizations to monitor human rights.
7. Stop targeting peaceful political opponents, and allow them to continue their work without facing restrictions, persecution by the security forces or politically-motivated court proceedings.
8. Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, as well as the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
9. Allow international human rights organizations and UN Special Rapporteurs to enter the country, and grant permits to journalists, broadcasts and writers seeking to enter Bahrain to carry out their work.
10. Halt the policy of revoking the citizenship and deporting individuals, in whatever circumstances. The government must also seek to find solutions for those left stateless by the policy, and for those who were already stateless for other reasons.

