



GULF INSTITUTE
for Democracy and Human Rights

UPDATES ON THE CRACKDOWN ON
HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GULF

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BAHRAIN'S YEAR OF CRUSHING DISSSENT



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Darker and more dangerous: High Commissioner updates the Human Rights Council on human rights issues

Human Rights Council 36th session opening statement by Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Mr President,

The human rights situation in Yemen is extremely alarming, and for the third time before this Council, I urge establishment of an international and independent investigative body to carry out comprehensive investigations of violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. I note in this context that 62 international and Yemeni NGOs have submitted a joint letter to this Council's member states echoing the urgent need for such an inquiry. The minimal efforts made towards accountability over the past year are insufficient to respond to the gravity of the continuing and daily violations involved in this conflict. As of 30 Au-

gust 2017, my Office has verified at least 5,144 civilians killed and more than 8,749 injured since the start of the conflict; actual numbers are likely to be far higher. Coalition airstrikes continue to be the leading cause of civilian casualties, including of children.

The suffering of the Yemeni people is now compounded by the grave epidemic of cholera, which is a direct result of indiscriminate attacks by parties to the conflict on medical centres and other protected objects, as well as sieges, blockades, and restrictions on movement. We continue to receive numerous reports of arbitrary or illegal detention, enforced disappearances and torture and ill-treatment by both sides to



Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

the conflict. The devastation of Yemen and the horrific suffering of its people will have immense and enduring repercussions across the region. I appeal to the parties to the conflict to reach a negotiated and durable solution, and to adhere to their obligations under international law, including by facilitating the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian relief. I urge this Council to do everything in its power to seek a rapid end to this carnage.

... Since June 2016, the government of Bahrain has imposed severe restrictions on civil society and political activism through arrests, intimidation, travel bans and closure orders, with increasing reports of torture by the security authorities. Today, the democratic space in the coun-

try has essentially been shut down. I have repeatedly drawn the attention of the authorities to the gravity of the situation in the Kingdom, in conjunction with many human rights mechanisms and joint statements by Member States. I have also repeatedly offered the support of my Office to assist with practical improvements. These efforts have been met with point-blank denials, unfounded accusations and unreasonable last-minute conditions to technical missions. But no public relations campaign can paper over the violations being inflicted on the people of Bahrain. They deserve real respect for their human rights, and I continue to offer the assistance of my Office to any genuine effort to address the situation.

Violations against activist continue

Bahraini authorities banned former Secretary-General of Wa'ad Society, Radhi Al-Mousawi, from travelling while he was heading to the airport this morning on 3 September 2017, reported society member Yousef Al-Khaja. Then, he was summoned for interrogation on 11 September 2017

On 4 September 2017, Deputy Head of the European-Bahraini Organization for Human Rights (EBOHR), activist Fatima **al-Halwachi**, said that Bahraini security authorities prevented her from leaving the country without clarifying the reasons.

On 12 September 2017, Bahraini security authorities prevented deputy president of the dissolved Bahrain Teachers Association Jalila Al-Salman from leaving the country. She was told that the travel ban is issued by the Public Prosecution.

Few days later, on 18 September 2017, Sayed Sharaf Al-Mosawi, the chairman of the Bahrain Transparency Society was banned from leaving the country.

Farida Ghulam, central committee member in National Democratic Action (Wa'ad) was banned from travelling after she was summoned for interrogation and accused of assembly

on 20 September 2017.

Besides, activists Abdulnabi Al-Ekri, Faisal Hayyat, Ibrahim Sharif, Ahmed Radhi, Ahmad Al-Saffar, Enas Oun, Zainab Al Khamis, Munther Al-Khor, Rayhana Al-Moussawi and her husband Talal Al-Alawi and Nidal Al-Salman were summoned for interrogation and accused of illegal assembly to justify the travel bans against them.

On 23 September 2017, Bahraini authorities arrested blogger Rawan Sanqour from her work place over her social media activities. The State Prosecutor's Office ordered detaining Sanqour for 30 days, pending investigation after charging with "contacting foreign organizations". Sanqour called on the International Committee of the Red Cross to help guarantee the treatment of her detained brother, Ali Sanqour.

Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (**BIRD**) said that the Public Prosecution brought new charges against prominent human rights activist and President of Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab, over the background of social media posts on Twitter and Instagram.



Security authorities in Bahrain launch widespread security crackdown

Bahraini security authorities continued to set up more concrete barriers on 1 September 2017 in the town of Diraz, which has suffered a strict siege for more than 14 months.

Besides, the Bahraini security authorities intensified their presence in the house surrounding of the spiritual leader of Shia majority, Sheikh Isa Qassim, who has been under house arrest since 23 May 2017. Activists published photos showing the surrounding of Sheikh Qassim house where barriers were put to prevent passage of vehicles, thus, transferring the house surrounding into a “restricted area”.

Moreover, security authorities continue to prevent the country’s Shiite majority from holding their larg-

est Friday prayers for more than 60 consecutive weeks, by continuing to impose a siege on the town of Diraz that is resided by over 20 thousand citizens.

Security authorities have launched a widespread campaign targeting peaceful activists and opponents of the regime, which resulted in a number of arrests.

The father of the executed youth Ali Al-Singace was summoned for interrogation on 4 September 2017. Social media outlets said that the interior ministry forces raided the house of Abdulrida Bu Hmayed, who was shot in his head in February 2011, attacked his father and wife and sprayed pepper in faces of home residents.

> Bahrain



Jaw Central Prison

Prisons' administrations violate the prisoners' basic rights

Political prisoners held at the Jaw Central Prison began an open hunger strike, which is to continue until their demands are met, in protest against the deteriorating conditions in the prison on 9 September 2017. Since the onset of the year, detainees have complained about widespread violations practiced against them and even denial of their right to pray and go outside to the prison yards. However, information revealed that the authorities of the aforementioned prison transferred a large number of prisoners on hunger strike to solitary confinement after they refused to end the strike. Furthermore, families of the detainees said that they lost contact with their sons since the beginning of the strike.

Families of a number prisoners held at Dry Dock Prison reported that inmates have been suffering more ha-

rassment by the security authorities, as they continue their hunger strike in protest of the deterioration of prison conditions. The families stressed that the authorities refused the access of money for prisoners in a new measure aimed at increasing the pressure on prisoners, adding that the authorities also began, for the first time, monitoring family visits, which has not taken place before.

Moreover, Al-Khabbaz family said that Jaw prison administration has been preventing them from meeting their sons: Maher, Mohammad, Mortada and Fadhel Al-Kahbbaz since about 8 months. The family stated that the prison administration prevented their group family visits and insists that they have individual family visits. However, the four brothers refused this measure.

British Foreign Office spokesman **Edwin Samuel** said his government would examine the Amnesty International report, which stated that the silence of Britain and the US contributed to the increase in human rights violations in Bahrain.

British MP Tom Brake raised a question to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on whether it will ask the Bahraini government for explanations on providing adequate food and medical care as well as contacting with family members of all political prisoners, in particular Ibtisam Al-Saegh and Hajar Mansour.

International attitude towards the human rights situation in Bahrain



Edwin Samuel

U.S. State Department approved \$3.8 billion arms sales despite human rights concerns

The U.S. State Department has approved arms sales packages worth more than \$3.8 billion to Bahrain including F-16 jets, upgrades, missiles and patrol boats, the Pentagon said.

The **approvals coincide** with the State Department's notification to Congress, which had held up a similar arms deal last year over human rights concerns.



International Human Rights Organisations

Amnesty: 'No one can protect you': Bahrain's year of crushing dissent

Amnesty International issued on 7 September 2017 a detailed report about human rights conditions in Bahrain in which it indicated to the serious violations practiced by the authorities against their critics.

The report entitled **"Bahrain: No One Can Protect You"** that came in 48 pages included testimonies of activists and victims subjected to torture and arrest.

"Since June 2016, Bahrain has rapidly deteriorated into a full-blown human rights crisis. The authorities have dramatically stepped up their clampdown on freedom of expression. They have subjected over 160 peaceful critics to arrest, prosecu-

tion and imprisonment, as well as other forms of harassments," the organisation said.

"Those particularly targeted have been human rights defenders and political activists, as well as lawyers, journalists and Shi'a clerics. Credible reports indicate that security forces have subjected several of them to torture or other ill-treatment in custody," it continued. "The authorities have also targeted Bahraini activists residing outside Bahrain, subjecting their families to interrogation and prosecution in reprisal for their relatives' human rights activities or participation in protests abroad," Amnesty added.

> Bahrain

Stand in solidarity with Nabeel Rajab

Five international human rights organisations (Amnesty International, Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), English PEN, Index on Censorship, and Reporters Without Borders) called **to stand in solidarity with prominent human rights activist** Nabeel Rajab on 11 September 2017 in front of the Bahraini embassy in London, to show support for Rajab and for free expression in Bahrain.

Bahraini Human Rights Organisations

The Bahrain Forum for Human Rights (BFHR) said that 519 media materials and messages that incite or help to incite hatred were monitored in August through following what is published in four official Bahraini newspapers, 158 accounts on social media websites, and 47 articles from Gulf and Arab newspapers, the most prominent of which are, from Saudi Arabia: Okaz Newspaper, Al-Jazirah Newspaper, Al-Madina Newspaper, as well as Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Newspaper, and from the United Emirates: Al-Khaleej Newspaper and Al-Bayan Newspaper. The BFHR added that the Gulf crisis with Qatar was exploited and the concept of terrorism was broadly interpreted in order to distort the image of the national opposition in Bahrain through the official media and social media websites.

The BFHR pointed out that some of the media materials that help to incite hatred or contain false information against the opposition were written in a similar form in most of the Gulf newspapers. The BFHR ex-

plained that 42 media materials relating to the provocative campaign against the Bahraini opposition leader, Sheikh Ali Salman, were monitored in the Gulf and Arab newspapers.

The BFHR further explained that “306 media materials and messages that incite or help to incite hatred were monitored on social media websites (Twitter and Instagram), including accounts of official figures and journalists.” The BFHR pointed out that 46 provocative tweets against “The Rooms of Death” report launched by three Bahraini human rights organizations against the violations of the National Security Agency were monitored, noting that the most prominent accounts that publish provocative materials are the accounts of: Assistant Undersecretary for Information and Follow-up at the Prime Minister’s Court, Ibrahim al Dosari, former MP Mohammed Khalid, and journalists Said al-Hamad and Mona al-Mutawa.

Ashura Violations



15 villages

Banners and flags that read religious slogans were removed from 15 villages



Al-Biladi

Abdulmir Al-Biladi (eulogy citer) was directly arrested after finishing mourning processions in which he prayed for the release of detained eulogy citer Mahdi Sahwan



Hammadi

Ali Hammadi (eulogy citer) was summoned to "immediately" attend at the police station



43

Attacks

More than 43 attacks targeted Ashura manifestations



Mourning Processions

Security forces targeted the citizens participating in mourning processions



Food-Stands

Restrictions were imposed on food-stands that distribute food for the sake of Imam Hussein (A.S.)



Salman Al-Ouda

Saudi clerics detained in apparent bid to silence dissent

According to a Saudi twitter account, dozens of prominent Saudi religious and social figures, judges, academics, writers, and journalists were detained in an apparent crackdown on potential opponents.

Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda was among those detained along with the journalist Malek Al-Ahmed who is known for criticising media outlets and movies.

“New York Times” said that Some of them were taken from their homes in unannounced raids by security forces, and their computers, cell-phones and personal papers were seized, the friends and relatives said. Those arrested have been held incommunicado, and it is not clear if they have been formally charged with crimes. Saudi Arabia has not publicly released any evidence it might have against them.

> Saudi Arabia



HRW: As women's driving ban ends, provide parity

Saudi authorities, in ending the ban on women driving, should not impose any additional restrictions that it does not impose on men, Human Rights Watch said on 27 September 2017. Saudi authorities announced on September 26, 2017, that the government would end the long-standing ban on women driving cars in Saudi Arabia.

"Ending the driving ban is a major victory for Saudi women who have courageously worked for decades to confront systematic discrimination," said **Sarah Leah Whitson**, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Now Saudi authorities should guarantee that women are allowed to drive on the same basis as men so that no Saudi women

are deprived of benefiting from this reform," she added.

Despite this positive announced step, Saudi Arabia continues to impose other restrictions on women, including on travel abroad. Women are required to receive guardian approval to apply for a passport, travel outside the country, study abroad on a government scholarship, get married, or exit prison. They regularly face difficulty conducting a range of transactions – from renting an apartment to filing legal claims – without a male relative's consent or presence. Women also face difficulties in making decisions for their children on an equal basis with men.

> Saudi Arabia



HRW: Coalition's blocking aid, fuel endangers civilians

The Saudi-led coalition's restrictions on imports to Yemen have worsened the dire humanitarian situation of Yemeni civilians, **Human Rights Watch** said on 27 September 2017. The restrictions, in violation of international humanitarian law, have delayed and diverted fuel tankers, closed a critical port, and stopped life-saving goods for the population from entering seaports.

Bill Van Esveld, senior children's rights researcher at Human Rights Watch, explains the need to allow fuel, food, and medicine to reach the families that need it "before even

more children suffer and die of preventable causes."

According to Human Rights Watch, Yemen is enduring the world's largest humanitarian crisis. "An estimated 1.8 million children are acutely malnourished. Half the country's hospitals are closed, 15.7 million people lack access to clean water, and the country has over 700,000 suspected cholera infections, increasing by about 5,000 cases daily. From late April 2017 to mid-August, nearly 500 children died and 200,000 fell ill from cholera, a disease spread by contaminated water," HRW said.

Yemeni dies of torture in UAE run prison in Yemen

A Yemeni citizen died under "severe torture" inside a secret UAE run prison in the south of Yemen, activists on social media said posting pictures of the victim.

Pictures of the corpse of **Ahmed Dubba** revealed disturbing signs of torture after it was released from Khanfar Prison.

> Yemen



UAE prisoners of conscience are prevented from receiving any visits & put in solitary confinement

According to the **International Centre for Justice and Human Rights (ICJHR)**, following the prisoners, bloggers, activists and politicians 'protest and remonstrance against the humiliating and degrading inspection they have been subject to during holy Ramadan and against their exposure to incessant and continuous assaults which affected their dignity and humanity, Al-Razeen prison authorities have deliberately and purposely put them in solitary confinement for the most

frivolous reasons including the presence of dust in the room and lack of hygiene.

The prison authorities in the United Arab Emirates deliberately intend to place the prisoners of conscience in solitary cells, some of which are similar to coffins of extreme narrowness and heat, where they will be deprived of any visits or contact with the outside world and also prevented from having the Koran, newspapers, papers and even pens.

> United Arab Emirates

Bahrain in NGOs

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[Bahrain should not disregard substantive UPR recommendations](https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/21/bahrain-should-not-disregard-substantive-upr-recommendations)

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/21/bahrain-should-not-disregard-substantive-upr-recommendations>

[Bahraini Rights Critic Imprisoned for Yemen Tweets](https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/28/bahraini-rights-critic-imprisoned-yemen-tweets)

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/28/bahraini-rights-critic-imprisoned-yemen-tweets>



[Bahrain: Human rights activist's trial postponed to 27 September](https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2017/09/bahrain-human-rights-activists-trial-postponed-27-september/)

<https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2017/09/bahrain-human-rights-activists-trial-postponed-27-september/>

[Zainab Al-Khamees Summoned for Interrogation](https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/zainab-al-khamees-summoned-interrogation)

<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/zainab-al-khamees-summoned-interrogation>



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<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/zainab-al-khamees-summoned-interrogation>



[Qatar calls on UN Human Rights Council to end 'unjust' siege](https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170913-qatar-calls-on-un-human-rights-council-to-end-unjust-siege/)

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170913-qatar-calls-on-un-human-rights-council-to-end-unjust-siege/>

[Amnesty says after year of 'repression' in Bahrain, West remains silent](https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170909-amnesty-says-after-year-of-repression-in-bahrain-west-remains-silent/)

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170909-amnesty-says-after-year-of-repression-in-bahrain-west-remains-silent/>

Bahrain in the Media



['No torture in Bahraini prisons' claims UK-backed rights group](http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/no-torture-bahrains-prisons-uk-backed-rights-group-677571664)

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/no-torture-bahrains-prisons-uk-backed-rights-group-677571664>

[US State Department approves \\$3.8b arms sale to Bahrain](http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-state-department-approves-38bn-arms-sale-bahrain-1418589551)


<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-state-department-approves-38bn-arms-sale-bahrain-1418589551>



GULF INSTITUTE
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Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR), is a civil non-governmental and non-profit organization aiming to promote the respect for democratic principles, as well as establishing the human rights and social justice principles, and stopping the human rights violations in the Gulf Region in general and in Bahrain in particular. Headquartered in Sydney, Australia GIDHR has the right to open branches in other regions, has legal character and independent financial disclosure. GIDHR is seeking to be in the ranks of the major organizations defending democratic and human rights principles and values through contributing to achieve peace and justice for all in the Gulf States.

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