



GULF INSTITUTE
for Democracy and Human Rights

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Inside:

- 03 Bahraini children are facing detention, torture, & enforced disappearance
- 12 Yemen: 42,000 patients died due to closure of Sanaa Int'l Airport
- 16 Kuwait: Authorities crush Bidun protesters demanding citizenship rights

SAUDI ARABIA : 37 MEN WERE EXECUTED FOLLOWING UNFAIR TRIAL

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INDEX

BAHRAIN

PAGE 3

Bahraini children are facing detention, torture, & enforced disappearance
2 Victims of torture were executed amid Int'l calls to abolish death penalty
Prisoners of conscience started hunger strike to demand basic rights
Hakeem Al-Araibi: from shackles to freedom
434 Citizenship are revoked & unfair trials continue
Activists are still behind bars & freedoms continue to disappear

YEMEN

PAGE 11

UN Secretary-General: Yemeni Children are paying the highest price
42,000 patients died due to closure of Sanaa Int'l Airport

SAUDI ARABIA

PAGE 13

37 were men executed following unfair trial
Female activists were tortured while held in an unknown location

UNITED ARABIC EMIRATES

PAGE 15

8 Lebanese men arbitrarily detained for more than 1 year before brought to court
Alia Abdel Nour died away from her family

KUWAIT

PAGE 16

Authorities crush Bidun protesters demanding citizenship rights

BAHRAINI CHILDREN ARE FACING DETENTION, TORTURE, & ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Children have been always among the targets of the Bahraini authorities since the beginning of the crackdown against the dissidents and the peaceful movement demanding democracy, freedoms, and rights.

The Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR) monitored the violations against children between January and May 2019. 20 children were arbitrarily arrested during this period as following:

- 5 children were arrested in January: 1 from Karbabad, 2 from Duraz and 2 brothers from Al-Maamir.
- 11 children were arrested in February, most of arrests took place between 12 and 14 February in coincidence with the anniversary of 14 Feb prodemocracy movement: 1 child was arrested with his mother from Al-Maamir, 2 from Al-Daih, 1 from Al-Nuwaidarat, 1 from Abu Saibaa, 1 from Aali, 2 from Al-Musalla , 1 from Karranah, and 2 from Al-Shakhoura
- 1 child was arrested in March: from Karranah
- 2 were arrested in April: both of them from Duraz 1 was arrested in May: from Sitra – Markouban

6 cases of enforced disappearance were recorded among these children for a period not less than 2 days and more than 2 weeks in some cases.

Bahraini children have not escaped from being tortured, as well as the prisoners of conscience:

- 2 children were tortured in January
- 6 children were tortured in February
- 10 children were tortured in March
- 3 children were tortured in April
- 12 children were tortured in May

33 violations were documented against 17 detained children during the period between January and May 2019:

- 2 records of ill-treatment against 1 detained child in January
- 5 records of ill-treatment against 5 detained children, and 1 record of denial of education against 1 of the ill-treated children in February
- 10 records of ill-treatment against 5 detained children in March
- 3 records of ill-treatment against 3 detained children in April
- 5 records of ill-treatment against 4 detained children and 7 records of denial of education against 7 others in May

2 VICTIMS OF TORTURE WERE EXECUTED AMID INT'L CALLS TO ABOLISH DEATH PENALTY

On 27th July 2019, the Bahraini authorities executed 2 victims of torture, Ali Al-Arab (25 years old) and Ahmed Al-Malali (24 years old). The young men were arrested on 9 February 2019 and sentenced to death in a mass trial marred by allegations of torture and serious due process violations.

Local and international human rights organisations believe that both Al-Malali and Al-Arab were subjected to severe torture (including electric shocks), and were forced to sign false confessions extracted under torture. They were denied their right to a fair trial which complied with the minimum international standards of fair trials.

However, Bahrain had slammed all the international calls to halt the executions amid torture allegations.

Spanish MP Fernando Adolfo Gutiérrez Díaz de Otazu submitted a question to his government on 1st July, raising his concerns about the convictions the allegations of confessions extracted under torture and unfair trials.

UN human rights experts (Agnes Callamard, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human

rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; Nils Melzer, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Diego García-Sayán, Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers; and José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez, Chair-Rapporteur, Working Group on Arbitrary Detention) have appealed to Bahrain to halt the imminent executions of Ali Mohamed Ali Mohamed Hakeem Al-Arab and Ahmed Isa Ahmed Isa Al-Malali. They said in a statement "Prior to the conviction, Ali Mohamed Ali Mohamed Hakeem al-Arab was reportedly forcibly disappeared for a month, during which he was subjected to torture to obtain confessions which were then used against him in court. He was allegedly charged with killing a police officer, firing on a security patrol and injuring one of its officers, assisting in an attempted prison escape, and possession of firearms. He did not have access to legal counsel before the trial proceedings began."

Two US congressmen, Reps. Christopher H. Smith and James P. McGovern, Co-Chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, called on Bahrain to stop the execution of the two young men.

"We appeal to the King of Bahrain

to stay the executions of Ali AlArab and Ahmed AlMalali, as their confessions appear to have been obtained via the use of torture and without sufficient regard to the due process rights of the accused. We call upon the government of Bahrain to grant them a procedurally-fair and impartial retrial. We also urge the Bahraini government to provide all its citizens with equal protection under the law, including members of the Shia community," the statement read.

From his side, Democrat US Senator Bob Menendez posted on his Twitter account to express his deep concern by reports of executions in Bahrain and support the calls of the United Nations and NGOs for Bahrain to stop the executions.

Bahrain Forum for Human Rights (BFHR), Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR), and SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights appealed the international community to interfere and save detainees Ali Al-Arab and Ahmad Al-Malali from execution. The aforementioned organisations documented in their statement the severe torture which both victims were subjected to in Criminal Investigations Directorate.

Following the executions, international calls condemning implementing the punishment and called the Bahraini authorities to abolish the death penalty.

The spokesperson of the UN High

Commissioner for Human Rights, Rupert Colville, said in a press conference on 30 July "we strongly condemn the execution on 26 July in Manama". He, also, expressed the "commissioner's grave concern" about the future of other detainees who remain on death row in Bahrain and said that they are at risk of imminent execution.

"We fully support the call by the UN experts for the Bahraini authorities to establish an official moratorium on all executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty," he said.

The European Union spokesperson said in a statement "The death penalty is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, which fails to act as a deterrent and represents an unacceptable denial of human dignity and integrity."

The European Union is unequivocally opposed to the use of capital punishment in all circumstances and calls on the Kingdom of Bahrain to introduce a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition," the statement continued.

The French Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that "France joins fully in the statements made by its European partners and the European External Action Service concerning the execution of three Bahraini nationals on July 27 by the authorities of the Kingdom of Bahrain."



PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE STARTED HUNGER STRIKE TO DEMAND BASIC RIGHTS

More than 600 prisoners of conscience and political prisoners in the Central Prison of Jaw (Jau) and the Dry Dock Detention Centre started an open hunger strike in mid-August.

It is noteworthy that 15 of the hunger strikers are kept in the facility's so-called "isolation building", and prevented from socialising with the prison's general population.

Detainee Hassan Al-Ghasra explained in a voice record that the strike comes in a protest against degrading conditions and intensified ill-treatment.

The detainees' demands include to receive family visits without glass partitions, the right to worship freely, and to return the isolated prisoners to the prison's general population.

Information reported the authorities threatened prisoners with soli-

tary confinement and other repressive measures attempting to drive down the number of hunger strikers.

The families were denied visits following the launch of the hunger strike. Activists reported that some families were left to wait for extended period of time before being informed that they would not be allowed to see the prisoners.

News from the prisons revealed that a number of detainees were accused of "inciting" the hunger strike and thrown into solitary confinement. Other inmates were told to end their hunger strike or face water and air conditioning cuts – a punishing measure in a country where summer temperatures tend to exceed 48°C.

Prisoners of conscience report that prisons are plagued by infectious diseases, particularly skin diseases, explaining that water cuts which

last over 12 hours sometimes, aid the spread of such illnesses due to poor hygiene. They also complain about overcrowding inside the cells, confining to their cells for prolonged periods, and food contamination. "The meal we received today [10 July 2019] was inedible because of its bad smell. We go hungry and they serve us small quantities. Isn't it enough that the quality of the food is poor and the

dishes are unwashed?" a detainee told his family.

Activists have continuously reported delays in receiving medical care and treatment, or denying access to adequate treatment in some cases.

Moreover, the families of the prisoners of conscience receive humiliating treatment by the security authorities including, but not limited to, degrading searches.

HAKEEM AL-ARAIBI: FROM SHACKLES TO FREEDOM

On 27 November 2018, the Bahraini former footballer Hakeem Al-Araibi was detained in Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok, upon his arrival. He was informed that the reason for his detention was in conformity with an Interpol red notice against him, issued upon request of Bahrain, the country from which he sought refuge. The Notice relates to politically motivated charges issued in Bahrain against Al-Araibi.

Human Rights activists in Australia, Thailand, and other countries campaigned for Al-Araibi's release.

In Australia, the Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR) worked closely with relevant government authorities, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, and other human rights organisations (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and others) along with the Australian football community to keep Al-Araibi's story alive in media throughout his plight.

GIDHR organised several protests in front of the Thai Consulates in both Melbourne and Sydney to call on the Thai government not to extradite Hakeem to Bahrain. The Bahraini community, journalists, activists and human rights defenders (including members of Amnesty International) participated in the protests. GIDHR also launched a petition urging both the Australian and the Thai Ministers for Foreign Affairs to Save Hakeem. The petition gathered 76 thousands signatures.

On 22 December 2018, GIDHR cooperated with the Professional Footballers Australia (PFA) and organised the first press conference to explain the



struggle of Al-Araibi. Members of Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, Professional Footballers Australia, Amnesty International Australia, former Socceroo captain Craig Foster and player Rodrigo Vargas, came together to call on the Australian government to bring Al-Araibi back to his family in Australia.

In early January 2019, GIDHR toured Australia, held meetings with human rights organisations: Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Refugee Council, and the Australian Human Rights Commission; met with the journalists who were reporting on the case and with Members of Parliament and the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

On 10 January, GIDHR organised a press conference in front of the Opera House in Sydney. Human Rights activists and organisations (Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Refugee Council,..), Former Socceroo Captain Craig Foster and a group of supporters stood together calling for Al-Araibi's freedom.

Later, Craig Foster roamed other countries fighting for Hakeem Al-Araibi. He travelled to Thailand to visit Hakeem in jail, and met with the FIFA in Zurich.

On the day of the Asian Cup Final (1st February 2019), GIDHR called for a global campaign to demand freedom for Hakeem Al-Araibi and all the prisoners of conscience. GIDHR organised 2 press conferences which took place in Melbourne and Sydney at the same time. Hundreds of people attended both protests. Activists in other countries: UK, Germany, Canada, Lebanon, and other countries held protests in their main cities too.

Thai prosecutors asked the Criminal Court to approve Hakeem Al-Araibi's extradition request for consideration, despite all the calls of the human rights organisations and football community to release Al-Araibi and allow his safe return to Australia.

On 4 February 2019, Hakeem Al-Araibi appeared to be shackled, barefoot and surrounded by policemen upon his arrival to Bangkok's Criminal Court. Craig Foster and journalists were waiting outside the court, and diplomatic missions attended the hearing. Hakeem's photo went viral on

> Bahrain

social media shocking the people who were campaigning for his release as they considered he was facing degrading treatment.

On 12 February, Thailand decided to release Hakeem and send him back to Australia to be reunited with his family.

The plight of Hakeem Al-Araibi highlighted the violations against the sportspeople in Bahrain and the abuses they were subjected to because of their participation in the prodemocracy peaceful protests. It drew the world's attention to the repressive atmosphere in the country and how Bahrain uses all the means to crush its dissidents.

The Australian community, now, know much more about what is happening behind the bars of the Bahraini prisons and away from the media eyes because of the campaigns which accompanied Hakeem Al-Araibi's fight for freedom. The Australian media reported on daily basis about Hakeem and his struggle with the Bahraini Royal Family over publicly criticising them.



> Bahrain

434 CITIZENSHIP ARE REVOKED & UNFAIR TRIALS CONTINUE

Bahrain continues to punish the dissidents by revoking their citizenship and declare them STATELESS. The numbers of Bahrainis who were stripped of their citizenship since 2011:

- In 2012: 31 Bahrainis
- In 2014: 21 Bahrainis
- In 2015: 208 Bahrainis
- In 2016: 90 Bahrainis
- In 2017: 156 Bahrainis
- In 2018: 298 Bahrainis
- In 2019: 181 Bahrainis (until the moment of writing this report)

However, Bahrain reinstated 551 cases, bringing the total number of the Bahrainis stripped of their citizenship down to 434 citizens. The reinstatement came after an unfair mass trial described as a

mockery of justice, in which 139 people were convicted of terrorism charges, the citizenship of all but one were revoked.

United Nations human rights chief Michelle Bachelet criticised Bahrain's mass trials. "There are serious concerns that the court proceedings failed to comply with international fair trial standards, with a large number of the accused reportedly tried in absentia," she said in a statement issued in April 2019.

Bahraini courts issue repeatedly lengthy and harsh sentences against defendants in political motivated cases. In many cases the defendants are sentenced to life in prison following unfair trials which fail to comply with the minimum international standards and conditions of fair trials.

ACTIVISTS ARE STILL BEHIND BARS & FREEDOMS CONTINUE TO DISAPPEAR

On 31st December 2018, Bahrain's Court of Cassation rejected the appeal of the prominent human rights defender Nabeel Rajab against his five-year jail term. International community, local and international human rights organisations are continuously calling upon Bahrain to release Rajab and other prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally.

On 28 January 2019, Bahrain's Court of Cassation has upheld the conviction of opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman and his life sentence following an unfair trial. US State Department's Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino said the verdict which "narrows the space for free expression and political

activity, something historically protected under Bahrain’s constitutional system.”

In January 2019, Bahraini Court of Cassation upheld a ruling to dissolve the opposition group National Democratic Action Society (Wa’ad) and confiscate its assets. This decision revealed Bahrain’s intention to use all means, including judiciary, to crush any form of opposition or critical voices in the country. Wa’ad was prosecuted for describing executed Bahraini men as “national martyrs.” It is noteworthy Wa’ad and Al-Wefaq (the largest opposition group in the country which was dissolved previously) were prevented from participating in the November 2018 elections, as were candidates affiliated with them.

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL: YEMENI CHILDREN ARE PAYING THE HIGHEST PRICE

A report issued by the UNICEF in January 2019 said that since the start of the war on Yemen in 2015 more than 6700 Yemeni children had died or been injured.

“Since [the Stockholm agreement], eight children have been killed or injured every day. Most of these children were killed while playing with their friends outside their homes or on their way to and from school,” Khairat Kabalari, UNICEF

regional director for the Middle East and North Africa region, said in February 2019. “Around 1.2 million children in Yemen now live in 31 conflict-affected areas, including Hodeidah, Taiz, Hajja and Sa’ada, in places where there is a high level of violence because of the war,” he added.

From his side, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: “Children did not start the war in



Yemen, but they are paying the highest price. Some 360,000 children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, fighting for their lives every day. And one credible report put the number of children under 5 who have died of starvation at more than 80,000."

Moreover, around 440,000 suspected cholera cases were reported in the first six months of 2019 com-

pared to 380,000 cases in 2018, and the death toll is set to soar as the rainy season begins. Data from the World Health Organisation shows that nearly half of the infected cases are children. Death rates from the disease have doubled as the Saudi-led coalition forces have destroyed clean water and sanitation infrastructure in the country.



42,000 PATIENTS DIED DUE TO CLOSURE OF SANA'A INT'L AIRPORT

According to the Yemeni Ministry of Public Health and Population, more than 42 thousand patients who were unable to travel abroad for treatment had died.

The Ministry said in a statement that more than 350,000 patients with various cancers and other diseases need to travel to be treated, in addition to the injured people of children, women and men. It, also, pointed out that the Airport closure led to the disappearance of a large number of important life-saving drugs.

Moreover, a survey conducted by the Ministry revealed that by the end of 2018, 92% to 95% of the devices in hospitals and health centres have been disrupted.

A report issued by UNICEF in June 2019 revealed that a mother and six babies die every two hours in Yemen because of complications during pregnancy and labour. "Only 51% of all health facilities are fully operational, and there is a severe shortage of medicines, equipment and staff. Home deliveries are also rising, as families are getting poorer every day," the report said.

> Yemen

MORE THAN 900 CIVILIANS DIED IN 2019 & 53% OF YEMENIS ARE FOOD INSECURE

United Nations said that about 900 Yemeni civilians have died in the war since the first quarter of 2019 only.

Saudi-led coalition have been targeting civilians in Yemen ignoring all the international condemnations and the international charters that insist on preserving the lives of the civilians during war.

Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation said that according to the results (issued in January 2019) of the integrated analysis of food security, more than 53 percent of Yemen's population are severe food insecure.

SAUDI ARABIA: 37 MEN WERE EXECUTED FOLLOWING UNFAIR TRIAL

On 23rd April 2016, Saudi Arabia committed a mass execution of 37 people, most of them were Shiites convicted in unfair trials.

The Specialised Criminal Court convicted 25 of the men in two sham trials that violated international standards of fair trials, based on confessions extracted under torture. Among them were at least 3 young men who were convicted of charges which took place when they were still minors.

In the first half of 2019, Saudi Arabia carried out more than 100 executions, yet more than 20 others are on the death row including religious clerics and journalists. Despite the international condemnations and the calls of the human rights organisations to abolish this cruel punishment, Saudi Arabia is still using death penalty to punish

its dissidents and to create atmosphere of fear in the country to prevent any form of criticism.

Murtaja Qureiris is a Saudi young man was arrested in September 2014 at the age of 13, over offences including attending the funeral of his brother Ali Qureiris who was killed in a protest in 2011. In August 2018, Saudi Arabia's Public Prosecution sought the death penalty for Murtaja even though some of his offences took place when he was only 13. International law strictly prohibits the use of death penalty for offences committed by people below 18 years of age. Murtaja has been sentenced to 12 years in prison instead of execution, however three other men; Ali al-Nimr, Abdullah al-Zaher and Dawood al-Marhoon, who were arrested while under the age of 18 are still at imminent risk of execution.



FEMALE ACTIVISTS WERE TORTURED WHILE HELD IN AN UNKNOWN LOCATION

Reports from Saudi Arabia revealed that a group of human rights activists were subjected to torture, sexual abuse, and other forms of ill-treatment. On 13 March 2019, Saudi Arabia opened individual trials of 11 activists, most of them are prominent women's rights advocates who were arbitrarily arrested in May 2018 during a crackdown against activists. Journalists working for foreign media, diplomats and other independent observers have not been allowed to sit-in on the hearings. It is noteworthy that the women were held in an informal detention facility in an unknown location for the first 3 months of their arrest.

The ladies said they were caned on their backs and thighs, electrocuted and water-boarded by masked men who did not identify themselves. Some women say they were forcibly touched and groped, made to break their fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and threatened with rape and death. The Saudi authorities have done nothing to investigate these serious

torture allegations.

Their charges, which are related to peaceful human rights work, include contact with international journalists based in Saudi Arabia and fully accredited there, foreign diplomats, Saudi human rights activists abroad, and international human rights organisations, deeming such contacts a criminal offense.

Later in the same month, three of the Saudi women activists, Iman Al-Najfan, Aziza Al-Yousef, Ruqayyah Al-Mhareb, were provisionally released and were reunited with their families after their 10-month ordeal.

However, activist Israa Al-Ghomgham and her male co-defendants are still in prison for participation in peaceful protests. The public prosecution dropped the demand for Israa al-Ghomgham's execution in February 2019 but the four men on trial, including her husband, still face the death penalty and she now faces a prison sentence for her peaceful activism.

> Saudi Arabia

8 LEBANESE MEN ARBITRARILY DETAINED FOR MORE THAN 1 YEAR BEFORE BROUGHT TO COURT

Emirati authorities arbitrarily detained eight Lebanese men for more than a year, without charges, in solitary confinement at an undisclosed location, and without access to their lawyers or the evidence against them, until their trial began on 13 February 2019.

Family members reported at least three of them were forced to sign statements while blindfolded and under duress, while another one was forced to sign a blank paper. A family member said one of the detainees' teeth were all broken and his ear looked mangled. According to the families, the detainees faced torture or psychological abuse.

All of them men lived in the United Arab Emirates for more than 15 years and worked there. Their families denied the charges against them and said none of them had any known political affiliations.

On 15 May 2019, the Federal Appeal Court in Abu Dhabi sentenced a man to life in prison, two men to ten years, and acquitted five defendants.

However, the trial was marred by violating the international standards of fair trials, denying the defendants their right to legal counsel, subjecting them to torture and prolonged solitary confinement. Thus, the verdict lacks any credibility.

Moreover, a sister of another Lebanese man, Ahmed Ali Mekkaoui, who is serving a sentence in the United Arab Emirates appeared during a TV news report. She said he has been at heightened risk of torture and ill-treatment, and highlighted the flawed legal proceedings against him, including arbitrary detention, excessive pre-trial detention, forced confessions, allegations of torture and lack of access to medical care.



> UAE

ALIA ABDEL NOUR DIED AWAY FROM HER FAMILY

On 4 May 2019, an Emirati woman, detainee Ali Abdel Nour, died after being denied adequate medical care and mistreated for more than three years.

Alia's trial was marred by allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and serious due process violations. She was diagnosed with breast cancer soon after her arrest. She was denied regular family visits, and her hands and feet were kept shackled for extended periods of time after she was transferred to the hospital in November 2016.

Despite her deteriorating health, the Emirati authorities ignored repeated calls by international human rights groups, United Nations experts, and international community to release her on health grounds. They even ignored the family's calls after they were informed that she had only months to live, during the Emirati 'Year of Tolerance.'



KUWAIT: AUTHORITIES CRUSH BIDUN PROTESTERS DEMANDING CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

The Kuwaiti authorities have arbitrarily arrested more than a dozen protesters between 11 and 14 July 2019, following demonstrations held by members of the Bidun group (without citizenship). The protests took place after Ayed Hamad Moudath (20 years old) committed suicide for reportedly being unable to obtain official documents and eventually losing his job.

The Kuwaiti authorities continue to deny the Bidun, who are long-term residents, their citizenship. Thus,

they are being denied a range of basic rights including their right to health education, and work, and are prevented from being part of the Kuwaiti society which they are living in. In 2018, the Minister of Education rejected a proposal to register the children of Bidun in public schools.

The Bidun society in Kuwait consists of more than 100,000 people, most of them are born in Kuwait and their families have lived there for generations.



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.

معهد الخليج للديمقراطية وحقوق الإنسان منظمة غير ربحية وغير حكومية، تم تأسيسه في أستراليا ويهدف إلى تعزيز ونشر ثقافة الديمقراطية، كما يسعى لتحقيق مبادئ حقوق الإنسان والعدالة الاجتماعية وإيقاف الانتهاكات في دول الخليج. وله الحق في فتح فروع أخرى في مناطق أخرى، ويكون له شخصية اعتبارية وذمة مالية مستقلة ولا يستهدف من نشاطه جني الربح التجاري. يسعى معهد الخليج للديمقراطية وحقوق الإنسان لأن يكون في مصاف كبرى المنظمات المدافعة عن حقوق الإنسان عبر المساهمة في تحقيق السلام والعدالة في دول الخليج.

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