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BAHRAIN NEGLECTS THEIR STRANDED CITIZENS ABROAD, 8 DEATH CASES WERE RECORDED



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BAHRAIN NEGLECTS THEIR STRANDED CITIZENS ABROAD, 8 DEATH CASES WERE RECORDED

Around 1300 Bahraini pilgrims were stuck in Iran after the outbreak of Novel Corona Virus (Covid-19) in several Iranian cities in mid-February 2020.

Spokesman for the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Seyyed Abbass Mousavi, said in a statement published on 4th March, "at present, around 1,300 Bahraini citizens who have come to Iran for pilgrimage and tourism have had to have a long and unwanted stay in Iran because the Bahraini government has neglected to address their situation."

"While many regional countries took action to take back their citizens in cooperation with our country's officials, sadly the government of Bahrain has not done anything to take back its citizens despite the readiness of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for cooperation, and has not either accepted the proposals put forward by certain parties," he explained.

18 Bahraini MPs submitted a proposal on 11th March, to delay the

evacuation of the Bahraini pilgrims stranded in Iran. GIDHR condemned such statement as it represents a blatant breach to the constitution of Bahrain, promotes sectarian discrimination and creates disharmony among the people of the one nation.

On March 12, GIDHR said that Bahrain's authorities declared suspending the flights of the stranded Bahraini pilgrims in Iran after the outbreak of Covid19- in multiple Iranian cities. Travel agencies were informed by official bodies the next flight which was supposed to bring the second batch of the pilgrims was delayed.

This decision was declared following the diagnosis of 77 passengers out of the 165 who were on the first flight, with Corona Virus.

This decision violates Bahrain's constitution which states in article 8 "every citizen is entitled to health care. The State cares for public health and the State ensures the means of prevention and treatment by establishing a variety of hospitals

and healthcare institutions." While Article 17 (b) clearly states that "it is prohibited to banish a citizen from Bahrain or prevent him from returning to it."

Moreover, a flight was scheduled to leave the holy city of Mashhad to Bahrain International Airport on Monday evening, March 2020 ,23, was cancelled.

76 citizens of those stranded in Iran had travelled to Muscat via Doha at their own expense. It was planned that they return to Bahrain on Gulf Flight 563, but the crew refused to allow them to board. On March 28, they arrived in Bahrain through Oman Salam Air. The return flight

lasted 3 days and citizens had to use 4 planes to arrive home. The 76 passengers were transferred from Mashhad to Tehran, from Tehran to Doha, from Doha to Muscat and from Muscat to Bahrain.

7 death cases were recorded among the Bahraini pilgrims stranded in Iran amid the negligence of the authorities and the delay of their evacuation. One death case was recorded among the Bahrainis stuck in the UAE as well.

Bahraini officials announced an evacuation plan, following the campaign on social media, that aims to bring all the Bahraini citizens abroad by May 2020.

HIGH CRIMINAL COURT OF APPEAL REINSTATED THE CONVICTIONS AND DEATH SENTENCES AGAINST HUSSEIN ALI MOOSA AND MOHAMED RAMADAN

On March 9, Human Rights Watch called on Bahrain's authorities to overturn the death sentences following unfair trials against Hussein Ali Moosa and Mohamed Ramadan, two men who say they were tortured.

A criminal court on December ,29 2014 sentenced both to death for murdering a policeman, despite their torture allegations. The Court of Cassation confirmed the death sentences in November 2015 but overturned them in October 2018 after a previously undisclosed medical report appeared to corroborate Moosa's torture allegations. Despite

the new evidence, the High Criminal Court of Appeal reinstated the convictions and death sentences on January 2020 ,8.

"Moosa and Ramadan have now twice been sentenced to death despite compelling evidence that their convictions were based on confessions obtained under torture," said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "This is an indictment of Bahrain's criminal justice system, and the Court of Cassation should not miss the opportunity to correct this grave miscarriage of justice by overturning their death sentences."



POLITICAL PRISONERS ACCOUNT FOR %17 OF THE 1490 RELEASED PRISONERS

The Bahraini Interior Ministry announced, on March 17, it had released 1,486 detainees for "humanitarian reasons, in the backdrop of current circumstances," a likely reference to the COVID-19 pandemic. About 900 of them were granted royal pardons, while 585 were given non-custodial sentences under Bahrain's law on alternative sentencing.

Only around 300 of them were political prisoners, what means that the political prisoners accounted for %17 of the released. This percentage is a disappointment to thousands of families who waited to see their sons released. However, the authorities are very preserved in the releases.

Human Rights Watch considered this prisoner release as a positive measure yet insufficient. HRW said that Bahraini authorities have not released any prominent political leaders or human rights defenders. Human rights defender Nabeel Rajab, imprisoned since 2016 for tweets alleging torture in Bahrain's Jaw Prison and criticizing the Saudi

and United Arab Emirates-led military campaign in Yemen, remains behind bars. Abduljalil al-Singace, 57, and Hassan Mushaima, 71, both leaders in the unlicensed opposition group Al-Haq, also remain imprisoned. Both suffer from serious chronic ailments.

On the same context, three Bahraini human rights organisations, SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights (SALAM DHR), the Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR) and the Bahrain Forum for Human Rights (BFHR), have called on the Bahraini authorities to take further measures to protect the health of detainees in Bahrain, in line with the Nelson Mandela Rules for the treatment of prisoners. These measures include releasing prisoners of conscience, a step that has been done by many countries in order to grant the prisoners' basic rights, overturn arbitrary judicial rulings against them, and provide them with reparations.

The three human rights organisations expressed their concern about the

fate of detainees in Bahraini prisons should the Coronavirus pandemic spread there, noting that the Bahraini authorities have a long record of depriving urgent medical care to detainees as a means of ill-treatment. If prisoners are affected by this deadly pandemic, the health care in prisons threatens to become even worse.

The organisations stressed that the Bahraini government should take exceptional measures to prevent the

infection of prisoners with this deadly virus, noting that the prison administration of the Bahraini Ministry of Interior must isolate each new inmate for at least 14 days before entering Jaw Prison and Dry Dock Prison in order to ensure they are safe and to prevent the transmission of the virus to the prisoner population. Furthermore, the arrest of citizens for political reasons must be stopped.

BREAKING THE SILENCE: FEMALE PROTESTERS WERE TORTURED & RAPED IN A BAHRAINI POLICE STATION



Najah Yousif, a former Bahraini political detainee, told BCC Arabic that she was tortured and raped in a security complex after protesting against Formula One in 2017. Ebtisam Al-Saekh, a Bahraini human rights activist, confirmed that she faced similar abuses in the same complex few weeks later.

In April 2017, Najah resorted to social media outlets to post against the Formula One, in order to raise awareness of the government's repressive measures.

A week after the Grand Prix, Najah was summoned to Muharraq security complex for investigation:

"The interrogator was there with others threatening me with rape. He brought someone working in the reception and threatened me saying this person will assault you in front of all of us," she said. Najah says that she signed a confession without reading it. She was then transferred to the women's prison. Each week she was allowed to use the phone for 30 minutes. She called a Bahraini activist in London and told him that she was raped in the security complex.

Ebtisam Al-Saekh was arrested over her tweets for "spreading hate against the regime. She was

tortured during her detention. It's been two years since the alleged abuses Ebtisam suffered. Dr. Nicola Cochran, forensic examiner at SPIRASI, an Irish organisation interested in survivors of torture talks about Ebtisam's state: "Her

psychological assessment demonstrates profound symptoms of anxiety and depression. It is supportive of a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress disorder. It is consistent with the alleged report of torture."



HRW: SAUDI FORCES TORTURE, 'DISAPPEAR' YEMENIS

On March 25, Human Rights Watch said that Saudi military forces and Saudi-backed Yemeni forces have carried out serious abuses against Yemenis since June 2019 in al-Mahrah, Yemen's far eastern governorate. The abuses include arbitrary arrests, torture, enforced disappearances, and illegal transfer of detainees to Saudi Arabia. Saudi and Saudi-backed forces have arbitrarily arrested demonstrators protesting the presence of Saudi forces, as well as other local residents not connected with the protests, in al-Mahrah's capital al-Ghaydah, residents told Human Rights Watch. Former detainees said that they were accused of supporting opponents of Saudi Arabia, interrogated, and tortured at an informal detention

facility at the city's airport in which Saudi officers supervise pro-Saudi Yemeni forces. Detainees' families said that Saudi forces forcibly disappeared at least five detainees for three to five months while illegally transferring them to Saudi Arabia and not providing information on their whereabouts. "Saudi forces and their Yemeni allies' serious abuses against local-Mahra residents is another horror to add to the list of the Saudi-led coalition's unlawful conduct in Yemen," said Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Saudi Arabia is severely harming its reputation with Yemenis when it carries out these abusive practices and holds no

one accountable for them.”

Page added: “The Saudi and Yemeni governments should immediately release any Yemenis wrongfully detained or transferred to Saudi Arabia and investigate alleged

torture and enforced disappearance by their forces in al-Mahrah. The UN Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen should also investigate these abuses, with a view to holding those responsible to account.”



3 BAHRAINI HROS: YEMEN IS FACING NOVEL CORONA VIRUS DANGER WHILE %95 OF ITS HEALTHCARE SYSTEM CAPACITIES ARE DAMAGED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SAUDI-LED WAR

The undersigned organisations (BFHR - GIDHR - SALAM) are concerned regarding the health security in Yemen. Novel Corona Virus pandemic is spreading hastily around the globe while Saudi-led coalition's war on Yemen demolished %95 of Yemen's health care system capacities. The signatories call on the international community and the United Nations to pressure Saudi Arabia and UAE to end their siege on the Yemeni borders, halt their military operations against Yemen immediately, and reconstruct the hospitals and health care facilities which were destroyed

by their airstrikes. The World Health Organisation (WHO) documented more than 381,000 cases of the Novel Corona Virus (Covid19), in 195 countries and territories around the world, with more than 16,500 deaths. The pandemic stretched health sectors in many countries to their limits trying to contain the virus and slow down its spread. However, the health sector in Yemen has been far beyond its limits since 5 years when the Saudi and UAE led coalition launched its military operations against Yemen in March 2015.

The Gulf Institute for Democracy

> Yemen

and Human Rights (GIDHR) documented, in the 19th issue of its newsletter, the Yemeni Ministry of Public Health and Population revealed that 92 % to %95 of the devices in hospitals and health centres were disrupted by the end of 2018. According to a report issued by UNICEF in June 2019 "only %51 of all health facilities are fully operational". The Saudi and Emirati led coalition has been targeting the hospitals and health care facilities in Yemen, directly and intentionally. More than 70 health care centres were destroyed since March 2015. Airstrikes targeted Al-Thawra Hospital, were conducted by the coalition in August 2018, killed at least 60 people and injured more than 100. Commenting, Yahya Alhadid, the Chairman of the Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR), said "we have seen the recurrence of some epidemics in Yemen due to the destruction of the Yemeni healthcare system, and infrastructure including the networks of the clean water and the sewage systems. The siege left Yemen short on essential medical supplies, vaccines and medicines; yet with not enough medical stuff as it was heavily dependent on foreign medical workers, many of whom have left Yemen after the war."

"In addition, the damage that occurred have strained the abilities of the Yemeni healthcare system, and left it struggling to meet the everyday needs and the preventable diseases

(such as the cholera). We are seriously concerned regarding the ability of Yemen to face the Covid19 pandemic, if the people have no access to clean water or the essential hygiene products in some areas!" Alhadid continued.

From his side, Baqer Darwich, the Chairman of Bahrain Forum for Human Rights (BFHR), said: "the Saudi-Emirati-led coalition targets the hospitals and health care centres in Yemen directly and intentionally, and damaged more than 70 health care facilities since March 2015. The hospitals are an obvious target for the coalition's airstrikes, as when several airstrikes targeted Al-Thawra Hospital and killed and injured more than 160 Yemenis."

"The violations of the international Humanitarian Law and tearing apart the bodies of the Yemeni victims, including children, were the façade of the Saudi Crown Prince's alleged reforms," Darwich added.

In the same context, Sayed Yousif AlMuhafdah, Vice President of SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights, said: "The pandemic of Corona Virus allowed the people to feel the suffering of those who are under siege. The siege on Yemen is the most obvious example for such suffering which should end. Killing civilians, bombing hospitals, starving millions of children are war crimes which should be halted, Humanity and noble human values have to prevail over this absurd and unjust war."



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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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