



GULF INSTITUTE  
for Democracy and Human Rights

UPDATES ON THE CRACKDOWN ON  
**HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GULF**

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# **PROMINENT WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS SPEND THE 2ND ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR ARREST BEHIND BARS**



[www.gidhr.org](http://www.gidhr.org)

[info@gidhr.org](mailto:info@gidhr.org)





## PRISONERS UNDER RISK OF CONTRACTING COVID-19

Although Bahrain had ranked 11th across the world in terms of Coronavirus cases with respect to population, authorities continue to keep prisoners at risk. Prisons are a congregated setting where social distancing can not be met. Security authorities continue to hold a large number of prisoners in the same small cells. A prisoner told Reuters that 14 prisoners share a prison cell designated for eight only.

In addition, detainees confirmed that more than a dozen policemen and police officers in Jaw Prison got infected by coronavirus as prisoners. "We consider the step taken by the Interior Ministry very dangerous on the lives of our children. We do not imagine that these police who may be infected will be placed near our children who are already suffering," the families of Jaw prisoners said.

On the other hand, Jaw Prison administration punished a number of detainees who commemorated religious rites during the month of Ramadan. Administration prevented detainees in 6 prison cells, in building

12, from calling their families and going out to the yard until further notice. It also prevented detainees in ward 1 and 2, in building 4, from calling their families and going out to the yard until further notice.

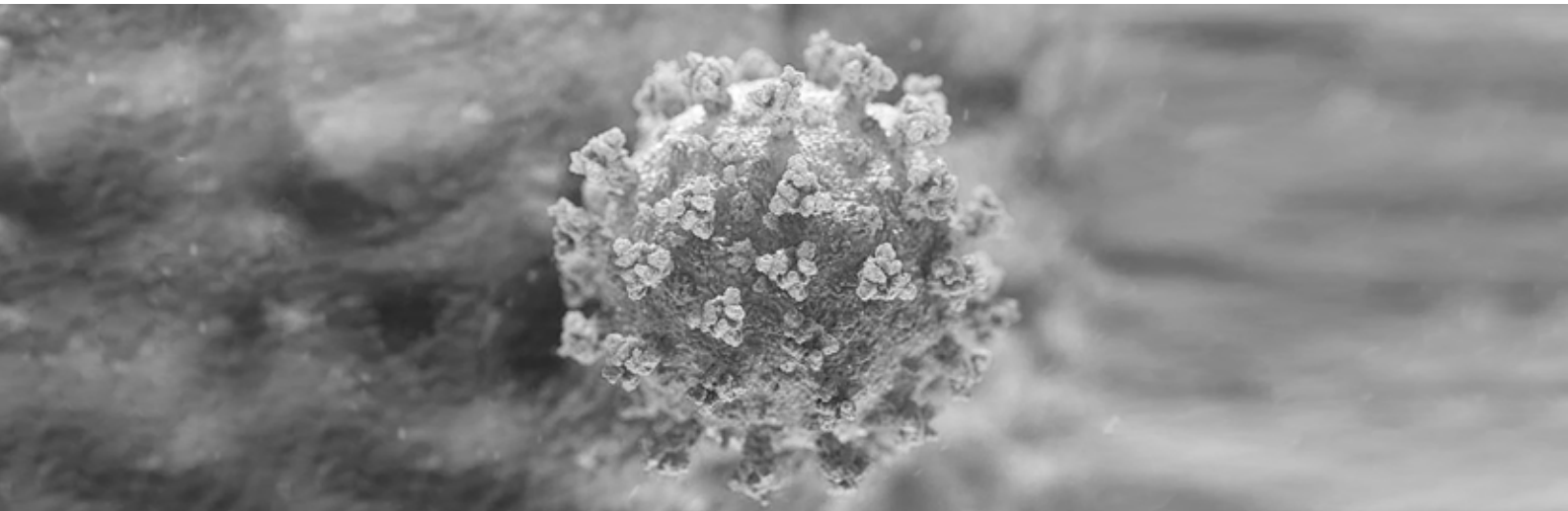
Moreover, no news has been reported about prisoner of conscience "Ali Isa Al-Qattan" for the third week in a row. And the family of prisoner of conscience Mohammad Al-Daqqaq, who suffers from Sickle Cell Anemia, demanded to allow him receive treatment before his case worsens, especially that he has an allergy and was born with one kidney.

The situation of Akil Hassan, a prisoner of conscience, has become more serious as he suffers from epilepsy, which is accompanied by frequent convulsions, fainting and loss of body control. Besides, Sayed Sadiq Al-Alawi and Haidar Al-Malla are demanding their right to receive treatment as they suffer from tooth pain that prevents them from eating and sleeping. Jailed Bahraini religious leader Sheikh Mirza al-Mahroos

> Bahrain

reportedly informed his family that his health was deteriorating due to the Medical Negligence. In the same context, mother of detainee Ali Hussain Ali Habib al-Fardan who suffers from Sickle cell disease says her son is “dying a slow death” & calls for his release. The family of detainee Mohammad Hamid al-Daqqaq is reiterating calls on prison authorities to provide their loved one with urgent medical treatment before his health deteriorates further. Al-Daqqaq is a Sickle Cell patient and has recently been suffering from frequent seizures. Detainee Mohammad Jassem Mansour, who is serving a 45-year prison

term, is reportedly in excruciating excruciating pain after being denied access to a dentist for two years. A number of detainees are subjected to individual reprisals, as is the case with the two detained brothers, Mohammed and Ali Fakhrawi, who were taken to solitary confinement after being beaten, punched and kicked several times, for insisting on commemorating religious rituals during Ramadan. Mohammad was transferred to solitary on May 10 and Ali was transferred two days later. Besides, running water has been cut off for days at Jaw Prison after maintenance workers contracted COVID 19.



## **CALLS FOR URGENT MEASURES TO PROTECT PRISONERS**

Amnesty International called for the immediate and unconditional release of all the prisoners of conscience, who are now at heightened risk due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“As this devastating virus sweeps

across the globe, prisons are at risk of becoming dangerous hotspots for COVID-19. It is more important than ever that states take urgent measures to protect all those who are behind bars, including by releasing all individuals who are held

> Bahrain

simply for peacefully exercising their rights," said Sauro Scarpelli, Deputy Campaigns Director at Amnesty International. "Prisoners of conscience have not committed a crime, and yet they continue to be arbitrarily detained in conditions that are now becoming increasingly perilous. The overcrowding and lack of sanitation in many prisons around the world make it impossible for detainees to take preventive steps against the disease, such as physical distancing and regular hand

washing. Their disease, such as physical distancing and regular hand washing. Their unjustified detention is putting them at heightened risk," Scarpelli continued.

From his side, Brian Dooley, advisor to UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, reiterated calls for the release of "elderly & frail prisoners" in Bahrain amid unconfirmed reports that over a dozen guards at Jaw Prison were suspected of having coronavirus.

## BAHRAINI HR ORGANIZATIONS

The Bahrain Forum for Human Rights (BFHR) said in a statement that 512 prisoners of conscience were released between April 30 and March 11 according to the following classification: royal pardon (57 cases), alternative penalties (139 cases), end of sentence (6 cases), end of arrest period and appearance before judicial authorities (9 cases), release (1 case), in addition to (1 case) from the Criminal Investigations Directorate. Preliminary information indicated that the 299 rest cases were released within alternative penalties, however, these cases are still being examined.

The BFHR noted that, with reference to the Attorney General's statement on April 12 about completing the release of 1,793 inmates, the outcome of political prisoners is as follows; 6% released in the royal pardon which

included 901 prisoners, and 46.1% released within alternative penalties. 26.1% of the 1,793 released prisoners were prisoners of conscience, which means that the majority of those released by the royal pardon decree or the Alternative Penal Code are criminal prisoners.

On the other hand, Salam for Democracy and Human Rights issued a report on World Press Freedom Day, entitled "Bahrain: Silencing Voices First". The report reviewed the state of press freedom in Bahrain by international organizations that monitor the level of press freedom in countries, which emphasized that Bahrain is "not free" in terms of press freedom and that the Government of Bahrain owns all media outlets. Bahrain has been ranked 169th out of 180 countries in the press freedom index.

> Bahrain



## **ALONGSIDE #RELEASE\_BHRAINI\_PRISONERS CAMPAIGN: SUE BOLTON TO GIDHR “WE NEED MORE PEOPLE LIKE SHEIKH ALI SALMAN”**

Sue Bolton, Moreland councillor and member of Socialist Alliance in Australia, supported the calls by Bahraini human rights organizations to release the political prisoners from the jails in Bahrain.

In an interview with the Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, Bolton noted that "the Bahraini government is following the footsteps of some other repressive governments in other parts of the world who are releasing prisoners convicted of criminal offenses, while keeping political prisoners in jail. This is a huge total human rights abuse to keep political prisoners in jail with great danger of catching the really horrific COVID-19 virus."

Bolton said that Bahraini jails lack treatment and that medical treatment is withheld from prisoners as a form of punishment, indicating that "Coronavirus knows no boundaries and affects everybody." She stressed that the virus would spread like wildfire if it reaches the

prisons. It will be a horrific death and like a death sentence for the prisoners who have other diseases, especially that it's not possible for prisoners to follow any kind of physical distancing, Bolton stated.

Bolton indicated that the Bahraini government's policy of allowing the virus to infect prisoners will lead to its transmission to the guards and then to their family members, and therefore to the rest of Bahraini society.

She added "The political parties in Bahrain have not harmed anyone or committed any crimes against anyone," noting that their campaign "was in fact against violent crimes against ordinary Bahraini citizens."

Bolton dubbed Sheikh Ali Salman "an absolute hero", stressing that "he should never be put behind bars in the first place. It the first crime of the Bahraini government."

She said that besides the human rights movements, we need people like him in society, because they are

> Bahrain

the ones who defend our rights around the world.

Speaking about Zakiya Al-Barbouri, Bahrain's only female political detainee, Bolton said that "the reason the government arrested her was because they believed she was a threat," noting that she was "being used as a hostage" by the authorities.

"You are heroes in your struggle against this authoritarian regime, and a part of the struggle for human rights in the world," she said, noting that by developing international solidarity among all these movements "we will continue to work for human rights and democracy in the world."

## **SAUDI AUTHORITIES SECURITY CAMPAIGN AGAINST SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY**

Saudi authorities detained Prince Faisal bin Abdullah Al Saud, a son of the late King Abdullah and former head of the Saudi Red Crescent Society, on March 27, 2020 and have since apparently held him incommunicado. The authorities have refused to reveal his whereabouts or status, a source with ties to the family told Human Rights Watch, which suggests that authorities may have forcibly "disappeared" him.

"Despite waves of criticism, the lawless behavior of Saudi authorities during the de facto rule of Mohammed bin Salman continues unabated," said Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Now we have to add Prince Faisal to the hundreds detained in Saudi Arabia without a clear legal basis."

On the other hand, Human Rights Watch said on May 25 that Saudi authorities have held two adult

children of a former official in incommunicado detention since security forces arrested them in March 2020. Omar al-Jabri, 21, and Sarah al-Jabri, 20, are children of former intelligence official Saad al-Jabri, who has lived in exile in Canada since 2017. Security forces also detained al-Jabri's brother in May, Human Rights Watch said.

An informed source told Human Rights Watch that the family believes the detentions are meant to coerce the father to return to Saudi Arabia. Al-Jabri was an advisor to deposed former crown prince Mohammed bin Nayef and served as the primary Saudi liaison to Western intelligence agencies. His children were arrested 10 days after the detention of Mohammed bin Nayef and another senior prince, Ahmed bin Abdulaziz, a brother of King Salman and an uncle of Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Mohammed bin Salman. Saudi authorities should immediately

> Saudi Arabia

inform relatives of Sarah and Omar's whereabouts and well-being, release

them, and end their travel bans, Human Rights Watch said.

## **PROMINENT WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS SPEND THE 2ND ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR ARREST BEHIND BARS**

The organization said that on 15 May 2018, a number of prominent Saudi women's human rights activists were arrested. They had been peacefully advocating for years for the right of women in the kingdom to drive, as well as broader reforms related to the repressive male guardianship system. "It is heartbreaking that two years have now passed with these brave women still behind bars, especially as during this time Saudi women

have been enjoying some of the newfound rights they had fought so hard for," said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Middle East Research Director.

"In prison, many suffered mental and physical anguish – including torture, sexual abuse and solitary confinement. Scores of others, though released, still face trial based on charges relating to their peaceful activism," Maalouf added.

## **AGNES CALLAMARD SHOCKED BY PARDONING THE MURDERERS OF JAMAL KHASHOGGI**

Agnes Callamard, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial described that pardon as shocking.

Agnes Callamard said that the Saudi authorities are playing out what they hope will be the final act in their well-rehearsed parody of justice in front of an international community far too ready to be deceived.

"Of course, justice should mean that the killers and their commanders should be duly, fairly prosecuted, judged and sentenced. But the grave implications of such a crime extend far beyond the authority of a Saudi courtroom. There are other pathways

courtroom. There are other pathways to justice that must also be pursued, including those that address the systemic problems highlighted both by the killing of Jamal Khashoggi and the impunity delivered by the Saudi system" Callamard added.

Callamard continued: "And for the future, to help avoid any future politicization of such a process, a UN standing instrument for the investigation of targeted killings of journalists and other human rights defenders should be established, building on the various models that have been tested over the years."

> Saudi Arabia



## **QUARTER OF 110,000 CHOLERA CASES RECORDED IN 2020 ARE FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 5**

UNICEF said that Over 5 million children under the age of five in Yemen are facing a heightened threat of cholera and Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD). More than 110,000 cases of suspected cholera have been recorded across 290 of Yemen's 331 districts since January 2020. Children under the age of five account for a quarter of these cases. "Children in Yemen continue to face

a myriad of threats to their survival. A further spread of cholera, high levels of malnutrition and outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases compounded by COVID-19 will only exacerbate the burden that children and their families already face," said Sara Beysolow Nyanti, UNICEF Representative in Yemen. "A tragedy continues to unfold in Yemen in the full glare of the world," she added.

## **MORE THAN 12 MILLION CHILDREN NEED HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, COVID-19 IS EXPECTED TO WORSEN THINGS**

Moreover, on May 28, UNICEF said that even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Yemen was a country on the brink of catastrophe. Chronic under-development and five years of war have led to a massive humanitarian disaster.

"More than 12 million children across Yemen need humanitarian assistance. Nearly half a million children require treatment for severe acute

malnutrition and could die if they do not receive urgent care. More than 8,600 children have either been killed or injured since the beginning of the conflict five years ago. 3,500 children have been recruited into the conflict, according to UN verified data."

"Before COVID-19 2 million children were out of school. Now because of the pandemic, schools have been closed around the country, leaving

> Yemen



an additional 5 million children out of school. And we know that in countries blighted by poverty and

conflict, the longer children are out of school, the less likely they are to return," UNICEF continued.

## **48,000 WOMEN HAVE DIED FROM AVOIDABLE COMPLICATIONS OF PREGNANCY & CHILDBIRTH**

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has warned of the death of more than 48,000 women in Yemen from complications of pregnancy and childbirth in Yemen due to severe funding shortages and the possible closure of reproductive health facilities, amidst rising risks

posed by COVID-19.

"If lifesaving reproductive health services are stopped it will have catastrophic consequences for women and girls in Yemen - placing them at even greater risk," said Dr. Natalia Kanem, UNFPA Executive Director.



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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.

61421237922+ | 61424610661+ | 61413984959+  
email: info@gidhr.org