

## Updates on the Crackdown on Human Rights in the Gulf

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**EUROPEAN UNION:**  
Recent Clashes in  
**DIRAZ**  
Represent  
Worrying  
Situation



## The 27th UPR Session in Geneva on Bahrain's Human Rights Record

The 27th UPR session in Geneva on Bahrain's human rights record was held on Monday, 1 May, 2017. [Bahraini human rights organizations](#) thanked the countries that presented fundamental recommendations to "stop the continuous violations and to achieve radical human rights reform in Bahrain." The recommendations were presented during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Bahrain's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva.

[The UK](#) criticized Bahrain for adopting policies of death penalties and citizenship revocations. Further, the United States severely slammed the government of Bahrain, and its recent measures against political parties and Shiite clerics. For its part, France called on Bahrain to, immediately and unconditionally, abolish the death penalty. Similarly, Germany expressed concern over banning Bahraini rights activists from traveling to Geneva to take part in the UN Human Rights Council sessions. Canada demanded the government of Bahrain to halt its policy of dis-

solving opposition political parties, and urged it to allow peaceful protests and abolish penalties on assembly.

Below we set out the major concerns and demands expressed by the states that took part in [the UPR session](#), and which highly welcomed the invitation extended to UN High Commissioner to visit Bahrain, stating that the visit should include Shiite villages.

### States expressed deep concern over:

- Failure to implement all recommendations of the BICI report by the government.
- The reprisal measures against Human Rights activists and banning their travel to Geneva.
- Execution of three dissidents, early this year.
- The continuous persecution of Shiites in Bahrain, arrests, and deprivation of citizenships for some Shiite religious clerics.
- Complaints of torture in the criminal investigations building and detentions centers in Bahrain, which reportedly take place during investigations.
- Failure to prosecute those involved in human rights violations, despite the establishment of accountability institutions and others involved in human rights.

### Demanded the government of Bahrain to:

- Fully implement the recommendations of the (BICI) – Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) –Bassiouni report.
- Adopt measures to combat intolerance, discrimination and incitement of violence on the basis of religion, and to proceed in dialogue to face challenges.
- Immediately halt death penalties especially those issued based on 2011 events, and allow the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit the country.
- End discrimination against the Shiite majority citizens.
- Guarantee the independence of the Public Prosecution's Special Investigations Unit (SIU), which investigates cases in violations committed by police and security men.

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- Open the doors for victims to litigate and be compensated.
- Halt dissolution of opposing political societies and lift restrictions on freedom of association and assembly, especially among Shiite citizens.
- Ratify the Convention against Torture, and to develop a national machinery to combat torture.
- Set a timetable to implement HRC recommendations.
- Lift travel bans imposed on human rights activists.
- Cancel and stop arbitrary citizenship revocations against citizens, and all death penalties,
- Respect rights of all groups participating in political activism.
- Cancel the latest constitution amendment that allows military courts to try civilians.
- Stop its policy of stripping journalists of their licenses, and allow them to carry out their work.
- Fully cooperate with the Officer of High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), and send an open invitation to the UN Special Rapporteurs in the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit the country.
- Abide by its international commitments, particularly to an inclusive reconciliation process, and to its promises in the previous 2012 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle in Geneva.



## European Union: Recent Clashes in Diraz Represent Worrying Situation

The European Union said that the recent developments in Diraz represent “a worrying development”, calling on all parties in Bahrain to “resume dialogue».

The EU said in a [statement](#) on Friday (26 May 2017) that “The recent clashes between security forces and civilians in Diraz village in northwest Bahrain, resulting in the reported death of at least five Bahraini citizens and the arrest of hundreds of others, represent a worrying development.»

«The Bahraini Government has the sovereign right, and responsibility, to undertake domestic security operations to ensure the safety of its citizens. However the authorities should apply the principle of proportionality when using force and be mindful of the repercussions that an escalation of violence will have for the Kingdom’s objective to achieve national reconciliation,” it added.

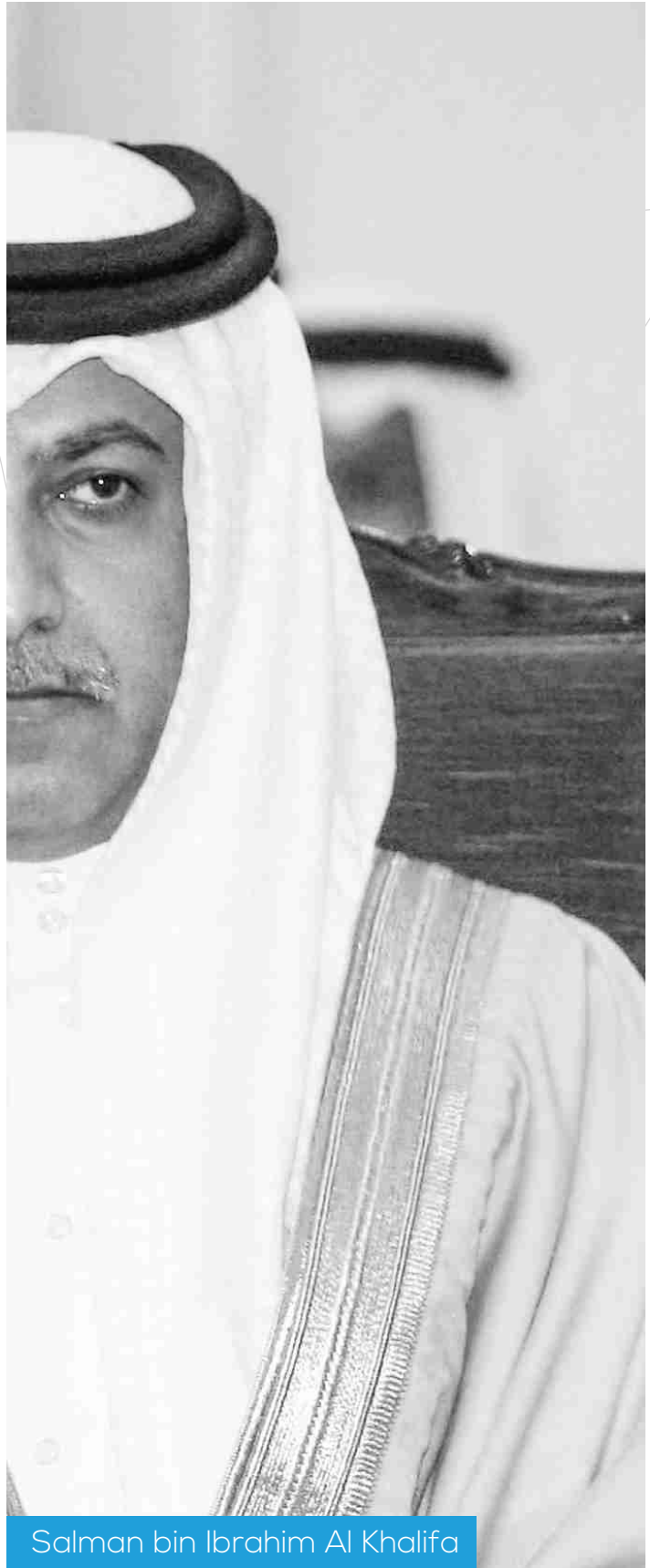
The European Union concluded its statement saying that it “calls on all parties to resume dialogue and work for national reconciliation in a peaceful and constructive manner in the interest of all Bahraini citizens.”

## HOSTING OF THE CONGRESS OF THE (FIFA)

Bahrain welcomed in a statement hosting of the congress of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) which was held in Bahrain, on Thursday (11 May, 2017).

A Human Rights Watch staffer Omar Shakir said that the Bahraini authorities [prevented him from entering the country](#) as he was intending to take part in the annual FIFA congress, which restricts access to foreign activists and journalists without mentioning any apparent justification.

Bahraini human rights organizations asked (FIFA) [to overturn the nomination](#) of the Asian Football Confederation Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, claiming his involvement in the arrest and torture of Bahraini players following the 2011 pro-democracy demonstrations. Human Rights Watch (HRW) criticized him for voting against a Palestinian proposal to halt Israeli football matches on occupied territories.



Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa



Ibtisam Al-Saegh

## Bahraini Authorities' Reprisal against Activists

The Third Minor Criminal Court adjourned on Tuesday (30 May 2017) the second case raised against the President of Bahrain Center for Human Rights and prominent human rights activist Nabeel Rajab until (12 June 2017), as Rajab needed to stay in the hospital from 4 to 6 weeks, according to his consultant doctor.

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said in [a statement](#) issued on 1st of May, 2017, demanded Bahrain to cease harassing journalists and to lift travel bans imposed on reporters. CPJ noted that the Public Prosecution summoned three journalists "for questioning, in the week before the U.N. Human Rights Commission conducted its Universal Periodic Review on the kingdom's human rights record."

Later, Leader in the National Democratic Action Society Wa'ad Society and prominent activist Farida Ghulam stressed that the authorities did not allow them to travel, although the human rights council session that reviewed Bahrain's human rights record concluded.

ARTICLE 19 [called](#) on the authorities of Bahrain to drop charges against human

rights defender Maytham Al Salman for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Throughout May 2017, activists were summoned for interrogation, reportedly ill-treated, threatened and forced to publicly announce their resignation from their human rights activities during interrogation by the Bahraini National Security Agency.

On 5 May 2017, Al-Wefaq Shura member, activist Nizar al-Qari was arrested and taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID), where he alleges he was deprived of sleep and handcuffed behind his back for long periods of his detention. On 8 May, he was charged with "illegal gathering in Duraz" and taken back to the CID where he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

On 23 May 2017, Activist Adel Al-Marzoog, was summoned by the NSA in Muharraq and kept in custody. Following his release, he announced his resignation and said that he will stop all his human rights activities. It has been reported that he was tortured during his detention and forced to remain standing for 18 hours.

On 27 May 2017, Activist Ebtisam Al-Saegh, was summoned by the NSA. After seven hours, she was released and immediately taken to the hospital in a very concerning psychological state, following a "severe nervous breakdown". During her interrogation, Al-Saegh reported that she was asked about the



Hassan Al-Sharqi

work of activists inside and outside Bahrain, severely tortured, sexually abused, insulted and threatened to be raped if she continued her human rights work.

On 28 May 2017, Blogger Hassan Al-Sharqi, was insulted during his interrogation, beaten and ordered to stop his activities on twitter. Besides, Activist Abduljalil Yousif, was interrogated for four hours, subjected to insults and psychological torture and was threatened that if he does not stop his human rights activities, he would be exposed and his family will be targeted.

Family members of three U.K.-based activists [were arrested](#) on 13 May 2017, over their protests against the king's attendance at the Royal Windsor Horse Show.



## Bahraini Human Rights Organisations

Six human rights organization said that some activists and bloggers were recently summoned to the National Security building, and were subject to torture and sexual assault to force them into suspending their human rights and media activism.

The signatory organizations of the [urgent appeal](#) are SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights, The European-Bahraini Organization for Human Rights, Bahrain Forum for Human Rights, The Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, The International Center for Supporting Rights and Freedoms.

In the appeal, the organizations said, "In May of this year, a number of human rights defenders entered for interrogation by the National Security Service, inside the security complex, the third floor. An interrogation was initiated against the law for long hours while standing and blindfolded for this entire period. Lawyers were not allowed to follow the proceedings of the investigation, in which these activists were severely beaten."

Bahrain Forum for Human Rights (BFHR) issued a [report](#) "The Military Judiciary in Comparison with the Standards and Guarantees of Fair Trials".

The report explains how the military judiciary, which the Bahrainis will appear before, violates the international standards of fair trials.

Bahrain Press Association issued its [annual report 2016](#) "Bahrain: Finishing Off The Margin," to indicate that the Government policies today, after successfully encircling the space of the private media and twist it, turned to the rest of the margin of communication tools to twist it, and to fill any gaps that might allow producing or trading what you don't want to hear, read, or see.

## The dissolution of National Democratic Action Society Wa'ad

In a serious violation of the right to association, the First High Administrative court ruled on Wednesday (31 May 2017) the dissolution of the secular opposition party: National Democratic Action Society – Wa'ad, and the liquidation of its assets. Human rights organizations said that the authorities aimed at silencing peaceful dissents.

## Updates of the Crackdown on Awamiya

Saudi citizens in the Eastern Province have witnessed the cruellest human rights violations, including severe torture, arbitrary detention, censorship, and arbitrary execution. On 30 April 2017, [the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights Ben Emmerson](#) arrived in Saudi Arabia. He released his preliminary observations expressing great concern over violations of fundamental human rights in the country.

For decades, Saudi security forces have run several military operations in the Eastern Province city of Awamiyah, putting the town's 30,000 residents at risk of violence.

The military raid is ongoing and has resulted in security forces shooting and killing people. In the course of the raid, Saudi authorities have blocked most of Awamiyah's entry and exit points, effectively placing the area under siege, with the apparent intent of [demolishing the historic 400-year-old Mosawara neighborhood](#).

The UN Special Rapporteurs on cultural rights, adequate housing, and extreme poverty released a statement calling on Saudi Arabia to immediately halt its ongoing demolition of Mosawara neighborhood in Awamiyah.

Despite these severe and ongoing abuses, the newly elected American President Donald Trump arrived to visit Saudi Arabia, for his first overseas trip



as president, on 19 May. In his trip, the US government sold the Saudi and its allies [around \\$100 billion worth of weapons](#).

The combination of Trump's visit and the announcement of the arms sale at this time, comes amid the engagement of the Saudi Arabia in [human rights violations](#), which indeed shows the unspeakable support to Saudi Arabia. Besides, the US refuses to denounce the violations committed by the gulf monarchies' regimes.

GULF INSTITUTE for Democracy and Human rights issued on 12 May 2017 a [statement](#) calling upon International Organizations to save the Civilians of Awamiyah.

## Saudi blogger Raif Badawi behind bars for criticizing Wahhabi clerics



Raif Badawi

Saudi Arabia's Supreme Court has judged the activist [Raif Badawi](#) despite the calls by the United Nations, the European Union, and many other international rights [bodies and countries](#) to free him immediately.

Badawi is the co-founded the "Free Saudi Liberals" website, on which he criticized the influential Saudi clerics who preach Wahhabism. Badawi was arrested under cybercrime provisions in June 2012.

Prosecution for the Saudi activist started in the year 2008 after he set up a website that championed [free speech](#) in the autocratic kingdom, as criticism of Wahhabi clerics is viewed as a red line as they are instrumental in supporting Riyadh's policies.

Saudi Arabia has been [criticized](#) by international human rights organizations for implementing repressive policies that stifle freedom of expression, association and assembly.

## Demolishing the 'Cultural Heritage' of Mosawara Neighborhood

United Nations experts have [slammed](#) Saudi authorities over razing Musawara neighborhood, despite repeated calls by the United Nations to halt the demolition, which erase the cultural heritage and violated human rights.

In a statement issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Karima Benounne accused Saudi security forces of "irreparably burning down" historic buildings and forcing residents to flee their homes.

"These destructions erase the traces of this historic and lived cultural heritage and are clear violations of Saudi Arabia's obligations under international human rights law," the UN official said.

Saudi regime forces equipped with heavy weapons have been deployed in Awamiyah since 10 May, and at least two people were killed when police opened fire on local residents who were trying to block bulldozers from razing al-Musawara.

Several HR organizations and activists have expressed [deep concern](#) about the living conditions of people in Awamiyah who are suffering from a severe water shortage and are using private generators to produce electricity.



## Yemenis Face Cholera Epidemic

In March 2015, the Saudi regime and its allies, backed by the US, began a military campaign against Yemen to reinstall its former government. The war has killed over 12,000 civilians since then. The invasion has been compounded by a Saudi blockade of the country. The Saudi war has left less than half of Yemen's medical facilities functional, amid the spread of [Cholera](#) which has killed more than 900 people and infected more than 124,000 others since late April, according to the United Nations children agency, UNICEF.

Meanwhile, reports coming out of Yemen say health facilities in the impoverished country remain in constant code black in the face of an overwhelming influx of cholera patients. Horrifying accounts of how a cholera epidemic is wreaking havoc are cited. Medics has voiced alarm over the raging spread of the [cholera epidemic](#) in war-torn Yemen, saying one child becomes infected every minute. Malnourished children, who number more than two million in Yemen, are especially susceptible.

Yemen's Health Ministry said Saudi Arabia's [aerial embargo](#) against the impoverished country has led to the deaths of around 10,000 patients, who were prevented from travelling abroad for treatment. The Ministry's spokesman Abdul-Hakim al-Kuhlani said some 75,000 patients were estimated to be in need of seeking treatment abroad each year.

The Saudi-led coalition also blocks the entry of medicine into the country, now hit by a cholera spread, which has killed hundreds of people, said the official.



### Bahrain: First civilian case referred to military court

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/05/bahrain-first-civilian-case-referred-to-military-court/>



### Bahrain denies accreditation to journalists

<https://cpj.org/blog/2017/05/bahrain-denies-accreditation-to-journalists.php>



### Bahrain Denies Entry to Human Rights Watch Representative

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/05/10/bahrain-denies-entry-human-rights-watch-representative>



### RSF urges Bahrain to drop charges against correspondent Nazeera Saeed

<https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-urges-bahrain-drop-charges-against-correspondent-nazeera-saeed>



<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/may/09/uk-aid-paid-for-military-band-to-play-at-queens-birthday-event-in-toxic-bahrain>



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GULF INSTITUTE  
for Democracy and Human Rights



**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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