



GULF INSTITUTE
for Democracy and Human Rights

UPDATES ON THE CRACKDOWN ON
HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GULF

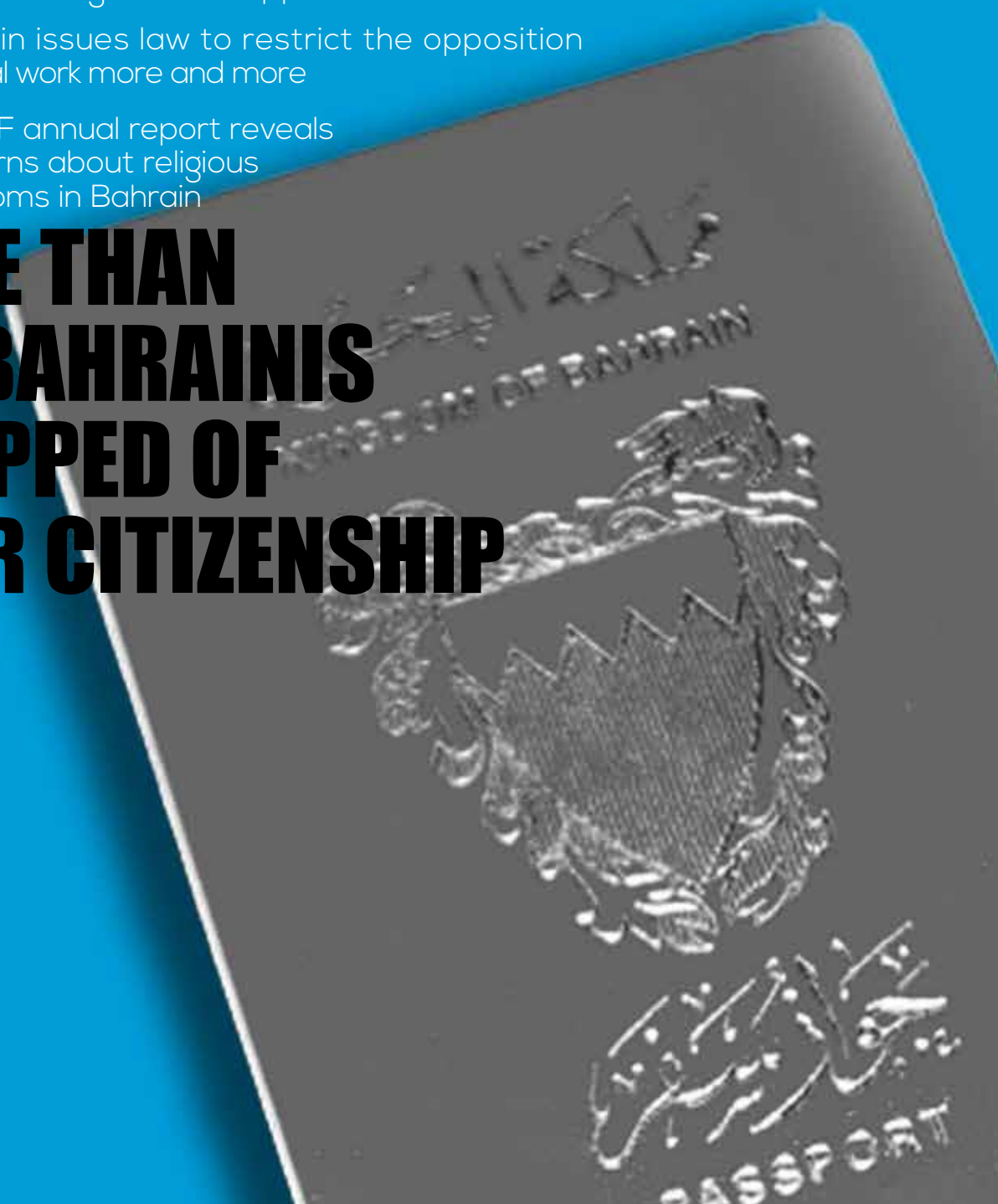
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Inside:

- 02 Bahrain continues to issue death and harsh sentences against the opponents
- 06 Bahrain issues law to restrict the opposition political work more and more
- 07 USCIRF annual report reveals concerns about religious freedoms in Bahrain

**MORE THAN
120 BAHRAINIS
STRIPPED OF
THEIR CITIZENSHIP**

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BAHRAIN CONTINUES TO ISSUE DEATH AND HARSH SENTENCES AGAINST THE OPPONENTS

On 21st of May 2018, **Bahrain's Cassation Court** upheld death sentences against 2 Bahrainis in a political-based case.

On the same day, the **Fourth High Criminal Court** revoked the citizenship of 9 citizens and sentenced them to prison terms ranging between 3 and 15 years, amid years long crack down on dissent.

Meanwhile, human rights organisations challenge the charges raised against political detainees, since they doubt the independence of the judiciary, whose members are assigned by royal decrees, and since it issues sentences based on confessions extracted under duress and evidence presented by secret investigations and anonymous witnesses.

The **Al-Ayam** local newspaper said that the Fourth High Criminal Court sentenced 53 suspects to life in prison and 3 others to 15 years in prison.

The court also handed down 10-year jail term to a suspect, 7-year jail term to 15, 5-year jail term to 37 and 3-year jail term to 6 suspects. Meanwhile, it acquitted 23 defendants and ordered the revocation of citizenships of the 115 convicts. From its side, **Reuters** described this case as "one of the most severe rulings yet in the Gulf island kingdom." It is to mention that a number of human rights organisations documented explicit torture cases in this lawsuit and that most of the defendants complained to the Ombudsman and Special Investigation Unit about being tortured, but to no avail.

Security authorities in Bahrain continued their crackdown against Shiites



Bahrain has once again demolished a Shiite mosque, located south of the Bahraini capital Manama, without a prior notice. The authorities demolished the only mosque in the region after a harsh security campaign that resulted in demolishing of 38 mosques and Shiite religious institutions in 2011.

It was reported that the resident built the mosque temporarily and supplied it with a generator from their own money.

VIOLATIONS IN THE PRISONS CONTINUE

Information from the Central Prison of Jaw revealed that the health of the detained political prisoner Abduljalil Al-Singace, one of the opposition figures accused of leading 2011 protests, deteriorated. However, the prison's administration refused to transfer him to the hospital or make him an appointment with a specialist.

Moreover, lawyer **Reema Al-Shaalan** said that the aforementioned prison's authorities are preventing prisoners from access to Shiite books. She indicated that this procedure is one of the measures that violate freedom of belief.

Human rights activist **Ebtisam Al-Sayegh** said political detainees held in pre-trial detention at Dry Dock Prison have been repeatedly harassed by the prison police during the first two weeks of May, including storming their cells in the middle of the night and forcing them to wake up and taking them out into the corridor to undergo searches. She said that the inspection teams had entered the cells and destroyed the belongings of the detainees and ordered the transfer of any detainee who objects to solitary confinement.

> Bahrain



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> Bahrain

BAHRAIN SPECIAL FORCES ARE TARGETING WOMEN

Bahrain's Special Forces arrested two Bahrain females (28 and 19 years old) without any explanation, following illegal raids on their houses at the dawn of 17 May 2018. The forces searched the two houses and sabotaged their contents. 10 days later, their families expressed their deep concern and fear over their enforced disappearance. The two families denied knowing the reason of their daughters' arrest nor their whereabouts until the time of writing this report.

A Bahraini court adjourned on 21 May 2018 the case of political detainee Najah Al-Sheikh for sentencing on 25 June while remaining in custody. A prominent human rights activist, **Ebtisam Al-Sayegh**, said that Al-Sheikh was subjected to torture and sexual harassment during an interrogation at the Muharraq security complex. Al-Sayegh added that after repeated summons, Najah Al-Sheikh was held about a year ago in preventive detention. Al-Sayegh further stated that Al-Sheikh filed a complaint to the General Directorate of Grievances, explaining all the methods practiced against her. She hoped she'd be treated fairly, but the reply came seven months after that: "The complaint does not fall within our area of specialty," they said.



> Bahrain



SECURITY GRIP AGAINST ACTIVISTS IS STILL TIGHTENED

Bahrain's High Criminal Appeals Court adjourned the appeal submitted by Nabeel Rajab, President of Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, on his 5-year jail term verdict, over criticizing war on Yemen, until 5 June for sentencing. Rajab is being prosecuted over tweets in which he criticized war on Yemen and torture in Jaw prison.

On 29 May 2018, the Bahraini authorities rearrested Dr Saeed Al-Samahiji, after convicting him of insulting a policeman. Appeals court upheld a one-month jail term against him.

BAHRAIN ISSUES LAW TO RESTRICT THE OPPOSITION POLITICAL WORK MORE AND MORE

Bahraini King issued Law 15/2018 on the amendment of some law provisions on societies, social and cultural clubs and private bodies working in the youth, sports and private associations field. **The amended article** stipulates that the candidate for membership on the board of directors of club or sports associations must not be member of any political association.

Few days later, Bahrain's parliament approved a **bill barring** leaders and members of dissolved opposition groups from running in elections, ahead of parliamentary polls this year.

> Bahrain

USCIRF ANNUAL REPORT REVEALS CONCERNS ABOUT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN BAHRAIN

The US State Department issued its **annual report** on international religious freedom, 2017, which comprised a chapter on Bahrain. USCIRF remains concerned about the “securitization” of religious freedom, citing Bahrain as an example where the government has cracked down on the Shi’a Muslim majority yet the U.S. administration is lifting human rights conditions on weapons sales to that country.

USCIRF Chair, Thomas Reese, S.J., said that “Religious freedom should not suffer under the guise of seeking to ensure national security.”

USCIRF issued a number of recommendations to the US administration including encouraging the Bahraini government to address religious freedom concerns both privately and publicly, and report openly on the government's success or failure to implement genuine reforms, including by making public an annual assessment of Bahrain's progress, or lack thereof, on implementing BICI recommendations; and urging it [the Bahraini government] to continue to make progress in implementing the BICI recommendations, including those related to freedom of religion and belief, sectarian incitement, and accountability for past abuses against the Shi'a community.

It also urged to press for at the highest levels and work to secure the unconditional release of prisoners of conscience and religious freedom advocates, and press the country's government to treat prisoners humanely and allow them access to family, human rights monitors, adequate medical care, lawyers, and the ability to practice their faith.

The report demanded to apply the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, Executive Order 13818, or other relevant targeted tools, to deny U.S. visas to and block the U.S. assets of specific officials and agencies identified as responsible for violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief.

It also recommended ensuring clear and consistent messaging at all levels of the U.S. government regarding Bahrain's human rights and religious freedom obligations under international law; as well as increasing support for rule of law, community policing, and countering violent extremism programs. USCIRF also demanded assistance in the training of government entities, including security officials, prosecutors, and judges, to better address sectarian violence and incitement through practices consistent with international human rights standard.

It also demanded to include Bahraini civil society and religious leaders in exchange and U.S. visitor programs that promote religious tolerance, interreligious understanding, and interfaith dialogue and urged the Bahraini government to pass a law in the Shura Council addressing incitement to violence in the media, and

ensuring compliance with international human rights standards. The recommendations also included urging the Bahraini government to cooperate fully with international mechanisms on human rights issues, including by inviting visits from the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

Irish Lawyer Attended Trial of Nabeel Rajab and Others: None was Allowed to Speak...It was Astonishing

International organisations said that an Irish lawyer they sent to observe the trial hearing of human rights activist Nabeel Rajab issued a **report** in which she said that the judicial measures in his trial were unjust and that they violate Bahrain's Constitution and international conventions on human rights.

She said in her report that the atmosphere in the court was tense and apprehensive. The prisoners were detained to the left behind a protective screen. The observer could see Nabeel Rajab, who looked tired. Whilst waiting for Nabeel Rajab's case to be called, the observer was able to watch approximately ten other defendants who had their cases heard. Most striking was that the defendants were not permitted to speak.

When Nabeel Rajab's case was called it followed the same process; as his name was called, he approached the partitioning screen and his legal team approached a bench below the judges. The judge spoke, but neither the legal representatives nor the defendant got an opportunity to speak, which contravene international standards of due process. After a very brief hearing of only two minutes, Nabeel Rajab was escorted from the court. The lawyer noted that Rajab was sentenced on the same day as over ten other defendants, and in none of the cases were the defendants allowed to speak.

Int'l Organization Led Protest in Windsor against Bahrain King's Visit

The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) called for a demonstration in London to protest the king's visit to Britain to attend the Windsor Horse Show as a guest of honour of Queen Elizabeth. Hundreds of supporters of Campaign against Arms Trade (CAAT) protested, at the entrance of the stadium where Royal Windsor Horse Show was held, against the presence of Bahraini King

Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, on 12 May 2018. CAAT said that the protestors sent a message of solidarity with those struggling for human rights and democracy in Bahrain. Protestors held banners that read "Stop Arming and Repression in Bahrain", "The UK Should not Welcome the Tyrant King of Bahrain" and "Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa Should be Tried for Torture, Not Welcomed as a Guest".

Reprieve: Bahrain: don't execute victims of torture

The British "Reprieve" organisation said it aimed to deliver a petition to the Bahraini embassy on Saturday 12th May, when the King of Bahrain visited the UK to attend the Royal Windsor Horse Show to demand him to stop the execution of political prisoner Maher Al-Khabbaz.

The organisation said that Maher Abbas Al-Khabbaz was beaten, whipped and electrocuted before he was forced at gunpoint to make a false confession to killing a police officer in 2013. His execution is now imminent, awaiting only a signed death warrant from Bahrain's King.

Under the title of "Don't Execute Victims of Torture", Reprieve called on the King of Bahrain and the Bahraini government to stop the executions of Maher and other victims of torture.



BAHRAINI HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

BFHR: The human rights situation in Bahrain continued to deteriorate in April 2018

Bahrain Forum for Human Rights issued its **monthly indicator** that documents the violations of April 2018. The human rights situation in Bahrain continued to deteriorate in April 2018. 1977 serious human rights violations were observed between the 1st and 30th of April 2018, including arbitrary arrests, house raids, unfair trials, crackdown on peaceful protests, restrictions on freedom of movement, prohibition of Friday prayers, media materials that incite hate speech, enforced disappearance, torture, ill-treatment, injuries, destruction or confiscation of property and violation of freedom of religion and belief.



BFHR: the anti-terrorism law

Bahrain Forum for Human Rights (BFHR) issued a **legal review** of the law on Protection of Society against Terrorist Acts, which the government of Bahrain uses to prosecute dissidents, protesters and political activists.

Salam: World Labour Day in Bahrain: how does it go?!

Salam for Democracy and Human Rights issued a **report** on the World Labour Day explaining the violations and practices committed against workers in Bahrain. The report introduces briefly the history of labour movements in Bahrain, before explaining silencing the voices of labour movements in the country, and the poor living conditions of migrant workers.

Bahrain in NGOs



Bahrain: UN rights experts condemn military court convictions, cite torture allegations

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23010&LangID=E>



Bahrain: Citizenship of 115 people revoked in 'ludicrous' mass trial

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/05/bahrain-citizenship-of-115-people-revoked-in-ludicrous-mass-trial/>

Bahrain: King commutes four death sentences to life imprisonment but trials remain nonetheless unfair

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mdell/8333/2018/en/>



Bahrain: NGOs call for release of human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja on 7th anniversary of his arrest

<https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/bahrain-ngos-call-for-release-of-human-rights-defender-abdulhadi-al>

Bahrain: Rights groups raise serious concerns over Nabeel Rajab's appeal hearing following trial observation mission

<https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/bahrain-rights-groups-raise-serious-concerns-over-nabeel-rajab-s>

Bahrain in the Media



Bahrain to ban members of dissolved opposition groups from elections

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/bahrain-ban-members-dissolved-opposition-groups-elections-1206808776>



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.

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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