



GULF INSTITUTE
for Democracy and Human Rights

UPDATES ON THE CRACKDOWN ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GULF

ISSUE 25#
JUNE 2020

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THE PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE ARE SCREAMING SILENTLY



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The Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights organised a 3-day conference, concurrently with the International Day to Support the Victims of torture.

The conference took place over Skype and was live streamed on GIDHR's YouTube channel and on some TV channels.

The first session was held on 25th of June, where the panellists shed the light on the suffering of the prisoners of conscience in Bahrain.

FATIMA YAZBEK



Fatima Yazbek, of GIDHR, presented a detailed explanation of the non custodial sentences law in Bahrain. The authorities in Bahrain try to take advantage of implementing such a law, whereas the way they are using it is unfair and doubling the violations against the prisoners of conscience. She insisted that she is not blaming nor condemning the detainees who choose an alternative non custodial punishment, and no one can lecture those heroes who paid an expensive bill for their courage. Yet she is condemning the

Government of Bahrain who are trying to score some points - which they do not deserve – for the continuous human rights violations they are committing.

BRIAN DOOLEY



From his side, Brian Dooley, of Human Rights First, said that such violations are still happening in Bahrain, despite the intervention of both USA and UK.

“We should continue to pressure the authorities because we are right, and they don’t listen to our calls,” he continued “the international community should pressure the Government of Bahrain to release the prisoners of conscience, especially amid Covid-19 pandemic”.

AYA MAJZOUB



> Bahrain

Aya Majzoub, of Human Rights Watch, confirmed they have evidence of torturing prisoners who were convicted to death and subjected to unfair trials.

“Zuhair Abdullah was sentenced to death after 55 days of his arrest without having legal representation, and after subjecting him to torture, electric shocks, and physical assault,” she added “despite the complaint submitted by Mohamad Ramadan and Hussein Moussa, the Court of Cassation upheld the death sentence against them without conducting any investigations regarding their torture complaint. The Court alleged not receiving such a complaint, but we did receive a copy of it.”

JAWAD FAIROOZ



From his side, Jawad Fairooz of SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights, said that the prisoners of conscience are tortured with the orders of Bahraini officials.

“We cannot believe that Bahrain is a democratic country while they still violate the most basic human rights. We are receiving reports of torturing the prisoners of conscience, even after their trial,” he added.

On the second panel of the conference which was held on 26th of June, the panellists discussed the prisoners of conscience behind Emirati bars.

DEVIN KENNEY



Devin Kenney, of Amnesty International, pointed that violations have been happening on the UAE for years, however since 2011 they worsened.

“The charges against Ahmed Mansour and those who were arrested with him were not obvious. The trial which those prisoners of conscience were referred before was unfair and oppressive, and did not meet the human rights standards,” he said.

SOUMAYA HAJ HASSAN



Soumaya Haj Hassan, of GIDHR, highlighted the ordeal of Arab detainees in the Emirati prisons.

Dozens of prisoners with Arab nationalities are held behind the bars in the UAE over political motivated charges.

“According to our sources, Coronavirus has spread in AlWathba prisons, infecting at least 400 people including 55 women and 37 prison guards. The six Lebanese detainees were infected too. The prison authorities did not provide them with any medications or medical care during their sickness, nor provided them with personal protective equipment or sterilised the cells,” she said.

DAVID HAIGH



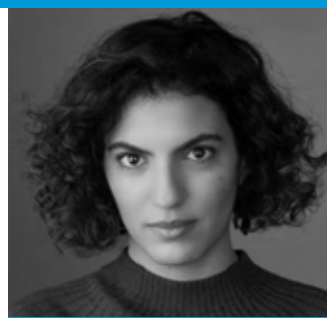
David Haigh, of Detained International / Association Victims of Torture UAE said that according to the annual report of USA Foreign Affairs, the courts in Emirates lack independence and there is no separation between the judicial and executive authorities. David spoke about his own experience as a victim of torture inside the Emirati prisons.

ALAA ALSIDDIQ



From her side, Alaa AlSiddiq of Wejha Centre, detailed her experience regarding harrasing the prisoners families. Alaa's father is a prisoners of conscience and Emirati authorities are still persecuting her family members who haven't left the country.

HIBA ZAYADIN



Hiba Zayadin, of Human Rights Watch, explained the miserable conditions inside the Emirati prisons. “In many occasions, we found out that prisoners are held in unhealthy awful circumstance, where overcrowding, lack of medical equipment, and denial of medical care are widespread,” she said.

HAMAD ALSHAMSI



While Hamad Alshamsi, an Emirati human rights activist, said that all cases related to freedom of opinion or freedom of expression are treated as State security cases, which have no proper due process.

"Some detainees were kept in places where nobody knows their whereabouts, incommunicado, and for elongated periods that reached a whole year in some cases," he added "arbitrary detention has been legal in UAE since 2003 where law number 2 was issued. In article number 28 it gives the state security officers the authority to detain people up to 60 days and that period can be renewed for extra 30 days."

The third panel was held on 27th of June, during which the panellists gave a deeper look on what's happening behind the Saudi bars.

Fatima Yazbek, of GIDHR, said Saudi authorities are tightening their grip over whoever opposes their policies. "Saudi authorities are subjecting their opponents and critics to arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance. More than 200 religious clerics were arrested during

the previous year, some of which are still detained. Arrests were not limited to academics or activists, a Snapchat influencer was arrested last month over a short video he recorded showing empty shelves of bread," she added.

DR ABDULLAH ALAOU DH



Dr. Abdullah Alaoudh, a visiting professor at George Washington University, pointed to taking advantage of the current pandemic, committing more violations and imposing more restrictions.

Alaoudh said that Saudi authorities paid \$1,700,000 to whitewash their image regarding AlNeom project.

He also mentioned Dr. Salman Alaoudh's case describing the charges against him as weird and funny.

MOUNA BEN GARGA



Mouna Ben Garga, from CIVICUS,

> Bahrain

highlighted the sufferings of the female political detainees behind the Saudi bars.

"We cannot count on the reports that emerge from Saudi prisons, as they are not complete and no one can access these prisons to confirm the information mentioned in these reports. Moreover, the prisoners cannot speak about what they are facing due to the fear of being subjected to more violations and ill-treatment," she said.

ADAM COOGLE



From his side, Adam Coogle of Human Rights Watch, mentioned that millions of dollars are paid to organise concerts in Saudi Arabia while no reforms are happening regarding basic rights or the criminal justice system which lacks independence.

"I think Saudi Arabia would be better served to fix its human rights abuses, that would be a better way to improve its image, rather than hosting celebrities sports football and musical events," he added "and obviously, a really good first step would be to stop using the death penalty for merely expression of one's peaceful ideas."

BAHRAINI DETAINEES ARE STILL DENIED MEDICAL CARE AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Bahraini authorities have ignored all calls to release political prisoners to prevent the spread of Coronavirus, although an anonymous detainee alleges that canteen workers at Jaw Prison have been infected with the virus. In an audio recording, the prisoner says inmates abruptly had their monthly visit to the commissary canceled. Whereas a number of detainees' families issued a joint statement calling on authorities to free the detainees, especially those with chronic illnesses. Bahrain is continuing to witness a surge in Coronavirus infections with more than 27,000 documented cases.

On the other hand, more than 30 detainees held in Jaw Prison contracted skin diseases and were denied medical treatment. The severe deprivation of treatment in Jaw prison has become one of the typical forms of torture and the prison's conditions have significantly deteriorated due to the lack of legal accountability of those involved with these violations. The family of detainee Mohammed Ahmed Hussein noted that his son, who suffers from heart complications, was infected with scabies and deprived of his right to

> Bahrain

adequate medical care.

Moreover, detainee Ali Hussein Al-Tarifi was held in solitary confinement on June 1 after protesting against the ill-treatment of minors in detention. While on June 8, detainee Ali al-Ghanmi was thrown into solitary confinement after demanding to contact his family. He was denied his right to communicate with the outside world for a week.

In addition detainee Sayed Ahmad Sayed Majeed Mahdi Fadl, 17 years old, complained about his inability to eat food after his teeth began to fall apart. He was denied treatment by the Dry Dock Prison administration. In the same context detainee Hussein Muhammad Ahmad Makki, a sickle cell anemia patient, has been deprived of medication to relieve seizures he has been suffering from for months. Detainee Ahmed Abdullah Al-Arab, who suffers from a broken nose, broken fingers, back

pain and teeth ache, has also been denied necessary medical treatment. In the same context, Bahrain Forum for Human Rights said in a statement on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture that the denial of treatment has turned into a typical method of torture in Bahrain's prisons. BFHR noted that the prisoner of conscience is subject to torture and ill-treatment at all stages of the criminal case, including the stage of carrying out the penalty. Head of monitoring and documentation at the BFHR, Hussein Nooh, said, "Bahraini prisons are a fertile environment for torture. Last year (2019), the BFHR monitored 352 violations of the right to receive appropriate and necessary treatment against prisoners of conscience." The security authorities rely on denial of treatment as one of the basic forms of torture, and it is carried out according to a systematic policy, Nooh added.

DEATH SENTENCE WAS HANDED OVER POLITICAL MOTIVATED CHARGES

On 15 June, the Cassation Court upheld death sentences against political detainees Zuheir Ibrahim Jassim and Hussein Abdullah Rashid, bringing the total number of political prisoners facing unjust death penalties awaiting the King's ratification to 11 cases. Human rights organizations say

that Zuheir Ibrahim, Hussein Abdullah and the convicted in the two cases were severely tortured to confess.

Zuheir was handed his death sentence after 55 days of his arrest only, during which he was tortured and ill-treated. He was denied his right to legal representation as well.

> Bahrain

INTERNATIONAL CALLS PRESSURING BAHRAIN TO RELEASE THE PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Sixty members of the European Parliament members have called on Bahrain to release prisoners of conscience and prominent political detainees because their lives are at risk from Covid-19. The MEPs addressed their appeal to King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa following the release of prominent human rights activist Nabil Rajab.

"We welcomed the release of 1,786 prisoners on 17 March 2020," the parliamentarians explained, "but this calculated step to keep prisoners of conscience and prominent political prisoners behind bars is unacceptable. This is in addition to the continuously increasing number of [coronavirus] infection cases."

From its side, Reporters Without Borders says Nabeel Rajab's freedom is incomplete because he is still denied his right to free speech. The organization also called for the immediate release of 11 other journalists held in Bahrain.

However, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights welcomed the release of human rights activist Nabeel Rajab and expressed concerns over his release conditions.

In addition, the Tom Lantos Commission on Human Rights in the United States Congress welcomed the release of prominent human

rights defender, Nabeel Rajab.

"I hope they will release all other prisoners of conscience as well, including Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Abduljalil Al-Singace, Naji Fateel, Ahmed Humaidan and Sheikh Ali Salman," he added.

In the same context, Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch said: "We are overjoyed to see Nabeel Rajab reunited with his family, but he is still not free to move about or speak out on human rights abuses. To be clear, the Bahraini government never should have arrested Nabeel Rajab in the first place, and it should immediately vacate his unjust charges and conviction."

Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Middle East Research Director, said: "While this is a moment to celebrate, it is impossible to forget that he has spent almost four years unjustly separated from them, or to forget the many other peaceful activists who remain behind bars in Bahrain. Nabeel's release must now be accompanied by the quashing of his conviction and sentence, the dropping of any outstanding charges brought against him in relation to his expression of peaceful opinion, and an end to the injustice he has been put through. Instead of releasing him on a

non-custodial sentence, the authorities must quash all sentences brought against him and ensure his access to remedy for the violations he has suffered during this time.

Bahrain's authorities must also release all peaceful activists who remain detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and other human rights".



CONTINUOUS ILL-TREATMENT AND MENTAL ABUSE ARE STILL PRACTICED AGAINST POLITICAL FEMALE DETAINEES AND DETAINED PRINCESSES

The Guardian said that families and friends of detainees held in al-Ha'ir say their fears have spiked in recent weeks, amid reports of two cases of Covid-19 inside the prison. Loujain Hathloul's family say she has periodically been denied phone calls. Close contacts of Princess Basmah bint Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud say that since mid-April she has been denied the calls that provide prisoners' sole means of communication with the outside world, preventing any updates on her condition.

Al-Ha'ir prison is a 19m-sq-ft maximum-security facility south of

the capital Riyadh, housing an estimated 5,000 prisoners, including those convicted for attacks on behalf of al-Qaida and Islamic State. The wing of the facility housing political prisoners including Hathloul is controlled by the Mabahith, a branch of the Saudi Arabian secret police that handles domestic intelligence. Family members say she is held in a cell roughly three by four metres, with brief daily access to a communal area.

Hathloul's family say the 30-year-old was censored during her previously regular phone calls. "She can't share anything about the negative

> Saudi Arabia

conditions or issues inside the prison, otherwise the authorities cut the call,” said Walid al-Hathloul, Loujain’s brother. “So it’s hard to tell what the real conditions are.” According to her family, Hathloul has not called for the past three weeks, and there’s been no explanation by the prison authorities.

The prison is famed for its luxurious rehabilitation wing, including a swimming pool and conjugal visits for convicted jihadists, but Walid al-Hathloul said that is not the

experience of other detainees. “There are sections that look nice, but that’s not what Loujain sees,” he said. Two sources close to Basmah, the youngest grandchild of King Saud who founded the Saudi state, say she is held in a room in al-Ha’ir prison with her 28-year-old daughter Suhoud. “There are other princesses in there with her, not in cells but in rooms,” said one person close to the family. “She is not a criminal or a terrorist, but she’s been thrown in prison where criminals and terrorists are.”



AHMED MANSOUR HAS BEEN HELD IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT SINCE MARCH 2017

Human rights watch said that Nabeel Rajab’s transfer from prison also puts a spotlight on Ahmed Mansoor, the leading human rights advocate in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) who, like Nabeel, also serves on Human Rights Watch’s Middle East and North Africa Advisory Committee. Ahmed

has been confined in an isolation cell in the UAE since his March 2017 arrest, deprived of books, a bed, even access to fresh air, leaving him in precarious health.

A UAE court sentenced Ahmed to 10 years in prison for “insulting the status and prestige of the UAE and its symbols, including its leaders”

> UAE

and “publishing false reports and information on social media.”

We don't know what alleged “insults” and “false reports” could warrant a decade behind bars. Ahmed's trial was closed and neither the charge sheet nor the court ruling has been made public. Ahmed used

Facebook and other social media platforms to call attention to miscarriages of justice in the UAE. He shared information with rights organizations abroad about unfair trials that had already put other Emirati rights activists and defense lawyers in prison.



UN SECRETARY-GENERAL REMOVED SAUDI-LED COALITION FROM UN'S LIST OF SHAME

The United Nations secretary-general removed the Saudi-led coalition from “list of shame” of armed forces guilty of killing and abusing children, despite being named in an accompanying report as responsible for strikes on civilians in Yemen.

UN officials said the decision had been taken because of a “sustained, significant decrease” in the number of child casualties caused by airstrikes in the Yemeni civil war.

Aid agencies and campaign groups reacted angrily and said they feared

political pressure had been brought to bear on António Guterres, the UN secretary-general.

“It's shameful for the UN secretary-general to give Saudi Arabia a free pass to kill children in Yemen,” Rob Williams, head of the British charity War Child, said.

“The secretary-general is adding a new level of shame to his 'list of shame' by removing the Saudi-led coalition and ignoring the UN's own evidence of continued grave violations against children,” said Jo Becker, children's rights advocacy

> Yemen

director for Human Rights Watch.

Adrienne Lapar, director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, said the delisting "sends the message that powerful actors can get away with killing children" and called for "an independent, objective, transparent assessment of the process leading to the decision".

"The latest decision by the Secretary-General to remove Saudi Arabia from the list of states is the clearest sign yet that the system is failing to protect children in armed conflict. Instead, these children have become a bargaining chip in wider political discussions," said Sherine Tadros, Head of Amnesty International's UN Office in New York.

"The UN resolution neglected the confessions of the coalition's states to commit some massacres against the children of Yemen and the human rights reports issued by the international agencies of the United Nations that prove the involvement of the coalition in killing, starving and maiming the children of Yemen," the National Committee for UNESCO said.

UNICEF in its report said that children in Yemen are facing a daily struggle to survive in what is the world's worst humanitarian crisis. After five years of conflict, around four in five children – 12.3 million – are in desperate need of aid. Tens of thousands of children have died, both as a direct result of the fighting, and from indirect causes like disease

and malnutrition. More than 1.7 million children have been forced to flee their homes and are living in camps or improvised settings in other parts of Yemen. Devastating food and cholera crisis emerged during the conflict; while violence persistently blights lives, with more than 35 frontlines still active across the country. The nation's health services are on the verge of collapse and the economy has been ravaged. The arrival of COVID-19 in the country layers a new emergency on top of an emergency, leading to fears of how far an already dire humanitarian situation could deteriorate.

Yemen was turned into the scene of the world's worst humanitarian crisis after Saudi Arabia and a number of its allies launched a war against the country about five years ago.

The US-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than 100,000 lives over the past five years.

More than half of Yemen's hospitals and clinics have been destroyed or closed as a result of the war by the Saudi-led coalition, which is supported militarily by the UK, the US, and other Western countries.

SAUDI ARABIA IS STILL BANNING OIL TANKERS FROM ARRIVING TO YEMENI PORTS

Saudi coalition continues to detain 22 ships with more than 536 tons of oil derivatives and prevent them from reaching the port of Hodeidah despite obtaining international permits. The ships carry more than 144 thousand tons of diesel, more than 263 thousand tons of gasoline, more than 29 thousand tons of gas and more than 100 thousand tons of diesel.

The period of detention of oil tankers ranges between 50 and 98 days. The longest detention period is for the DYNASTY oil tanker, which was seized by the coalition on March 25, with 29,262 hydrocarbons on board.

Depriving ships from arriving the port in spite of obtaining international permits is a violation of the provisions of the International Convention on Human Rights, the rules of international humanitarian law, and all applicable laws and customs, as well as a permanent disregard of the provisions and objectives of the Stockholm Agreement, which affirmed in its entirety the necessity of facilitating the arrival of basic materials and humanitarian aid to the port of Hodeidah in a manner that meets the needs and aspirations of the Yemeni people.



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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