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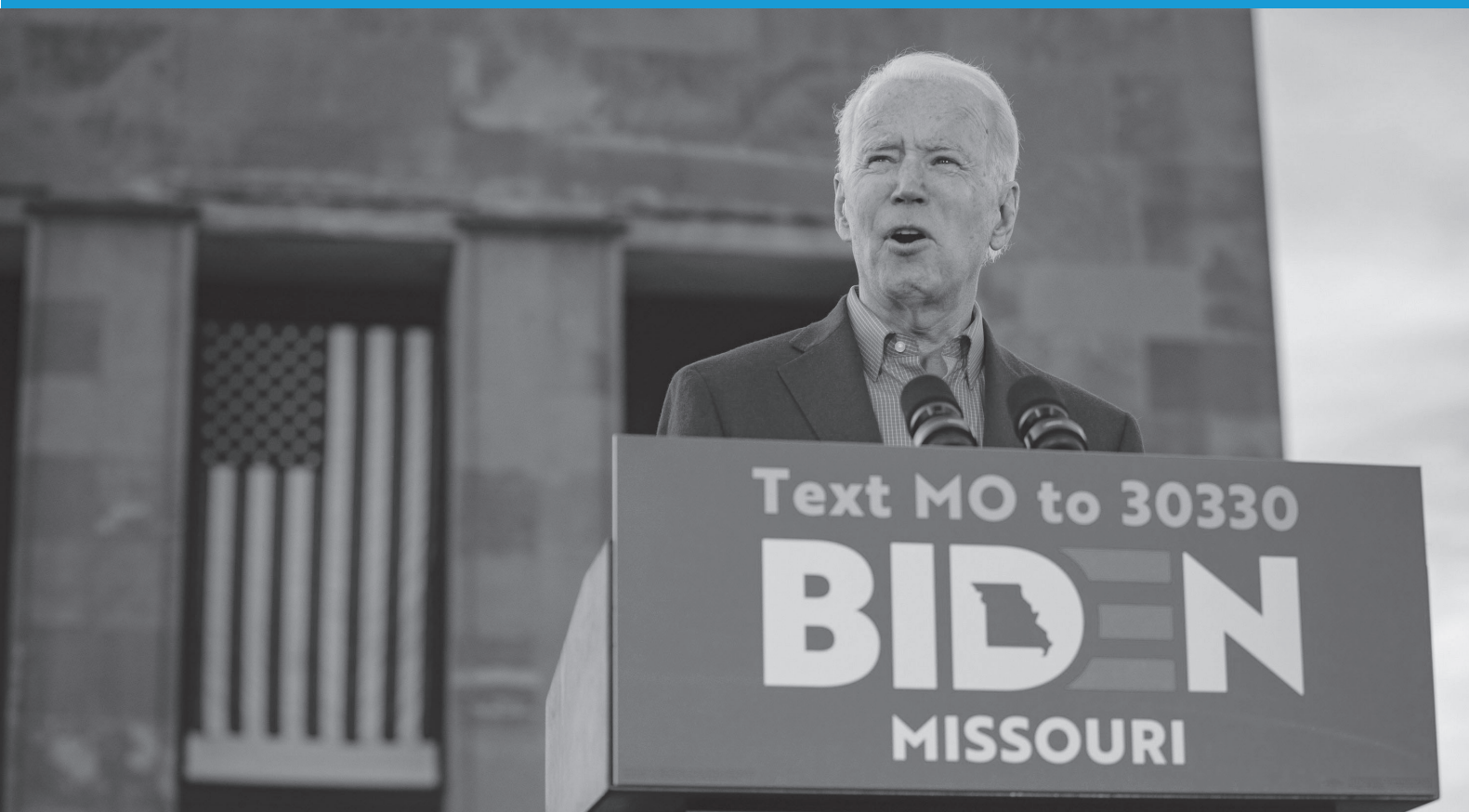
UPDATES ON THE CRACKDOWN ON  
HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GULF

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## **GIDHR addressed US President Joe Biden: Stop the War on Yemen**



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## Charges against **Sheikh Ali Salman** are negated, yet he is still imprisoned

Early January, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al-Zayani announced that the Kingdom's relations with Qatar will be reverted to what they were before 5th June 2017. However, Sheikh Ali Salman is kept behind bars, where he is spending his 6th year in prison after a judicial trial.

As the Gulf crisis began in mid-June 2017, Bahrain's public prosecution decided to accuse Sheikh Ali Salman of new charges, including "collaborating with Qatar, and spreading military information" after the Bahraini authorities published out-of-context segments from a 2011 conversation with former Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh

Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani. For his part, with former Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani. For his part, Sheikh Salman confirmed that the call was made with the knowledge of the Royal Court, and that it was a part of the mediation efforts to resolve the political crisis in Bahrain mediated by the United States and Saudi Arabia.

After the announcement of the end of the Gulf crisis at the Gulf Cooperation Council summit hosted by the Saudi city of Al-Ala, the charges of collaborating with Qatar are automatically negated.

## 2020 was not a good year for **human rights in Bahrain**

Bahraini authorities in 2020 escalated repression against online and social media activities, prosecuted critics for peaceful expression, and upheld death sentences against opposition activists following unfair trials.

"Bahraini authorities use the many repressive tools available to them to silence and punish anyone who criticizes the government," said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Bahrain has escalated its use of the death penalty,

has escalated its use of the death penalty, targeted people for their social media activity, and denied medical treatment to prominent opposition figures in detention."

Moreover, the Committee to Protect Journalists said that Bahrain's pro-democracy uprising in 2011 resulted in further government repression and that regional governments, including Manama used novel and traditional means to suppress independent reporting and target individual journalists.

> Bahrain

The CPJ, moreover, named Bahrain as one of the countries where journalists were imprisoned to quash coverage of unrest. One of those was Bahraini blogger Abduljalil Alsingace, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for criticizing human rights violations, sectarian discrimination, and repression of the political opposition. In this regard, 118 international and Bahraini rights groups called for renewing efforts to secure the immediate and unconditional release of a prominent human

rights defender and dual Danish-Bahraini citizen “Abdulhadi AlKhwaja”. Although Bahrain released a number of prisoners, most of which are convicted criminals, under the alternative punishments law, they kept the only female prisoner of conscience Zakiya Al-Barboury behind bars over political motivated charges. Al-Barboury started a hunger strike on 1st February protesting the inhuman conditions and ill-treatment in prison.



## **Sheikh Zuhair Ashour** forcibly disappeared for more than 6 months

Sheikh Zuhair Ashour was subjected to enforced disappearance for more than six months. Sheikh Ashour with a group of inmates were placed in Building 15 designated for isolation after they protested denying them to revive religious rituals inside the prison in mid-July of last year. Since then, Sheikh Ashour was subjected to severe harassment, insults, and threats. Commenting, GIDHR issued a statement in which they held the Bahraini Ministry of Interior responsible for any deterioration in the detainee's health. Moreover, GIDHR called on the international community, especially Bahrain's allies, to stop supporting the Bahraini government, which they described as “oppressive.” In addition, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and

North Africa (MENA), Lynn Maalouf, said: “We are extremely concerned by these claims of torture and the vulnerability that Sheikh Zuhair Jasim Abbas, or any other detainee, is exposed to as a direct consequence of being held incommunicado and in prolonged solitary confinement, in complete isolation from the outside world. No detainee should have their human dignity violated.”

After months of being held incommunicado by Bahraini authorities, with no contact with his family or lawyer, Sheikh Zuhair was finally allowed to phone his family on 17 and 18 January. He described in details the torture and other-ill treatment he had suffered over the past months. This includes being held in solitary confinement for months on end, being beaten by guards with fists, feet, and



hoses, deprived of sleep and receiving water only twice per day. From its side, the chair of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom Gayle Manchin expressed her organization's alarm over recent abuses perpetrated

against Sheikh Zuhair Ashour. "We are troubled by reports of the mistreatment of detained Shi'a cleric Zuhair Ashour, who was prevented from contacting his family for more than 5 months," Manchin wrote on Twitter.



## **Yemen: Activists launched the Global Day of Action for Yemen & the country is witnessing the largest humanitarian crisis**

Since 2015, the Saudi and Emirati led coalition war on Yemen, and the siege imposed on all its ports have killed tens of thousands of people and devastated the country. The UN calls this the largest humanitarian crisis on Earth. Half the country's people are on the brink of famine, the country has the world's worst cholera outbreak in modern history, and now Yemen has one of the very worst COVID death rates in the world; 1 person dies of each 4 people who test positive. The pandemic, along with withdrawal of aid, is pushing more people into acute

hunger. And yet both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are escalating its war and tightening its blockade. Global organizations and activists from the US, Britain, Canada, France, Italy, and across the world, called for an end to the war in Yemen and expressed solidarity with the people of Yemen. The organisations urged to stop supplying Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with weapons, to lift the blockade on Yemen and open all land and seaports, and to restore and expand humanitarian aid for the people of Yemen.



> Yemen



# **GIDHR addressed US President Joe Biden:** **Stop the War on Yemen**

GIDHR addressed US president Joe Biden on the Global Day of Action for Yemen urging to put an end to the war on Yemen. GIDHR said in their letter “the Saudi and Emirati led coalition directly target Yemeni residential neighbourhoods, schools, markets, leaving civilian casualties, without being held responsible for their crimes. It is estimated that, until November 2020, more than 100,000 Yemenis (including thousands of children and women) were directly targeted and killed.”

“The designation of Houthis as a foreign terrorist organisation by the former US secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, raised the concerns of worsening the famine and the humanitarian conditions in the country,” said GIDHR.

“For nearly six years, Yemenis have been facing a blockade on all their ports, preventing humanitarian aid, food, medications, fuel, and any other goods from entering the country. The blockade has been contributing to the humanitarian disaster which the Yemeni people are facing,” GIDHR continued.

The organization then urged US president Joe Biden to end the US support of Saudi Arabia’s war on Yemen as soon as possible, stop the arms sales to Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, pressure the international community and the coalition, especially Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, to end the blockade enforced on Yemeni ports, hold the perpetrators and

the instigators of the war crimes committed against the Yemeni people accountable and refer them before fair trials, compensate the victims of this war, and reconstruct Yemen.

Moreover, GIDHR with a group of Bahraini activists in Melbourne organized a vigil calling for the end of the Saudi and Emirati led war on Yemen.

In the same context, GIDHR launched a petition urging the Australian Government to stop arms sales to the Saudi and Emirati governments over targeting the Yemeni civilians and the war crimes committed in Yemen.

The petition added: “even though there was an argument that there is no evidence of using Australian weapons in Yemen but providing Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates with the arms is enough to encourage them to continue their brutal war to destroy every living being in Yemen.”

GIDHR through the petition called on the Australian government to stop selling Australian arms to Saudi Arabia and UAE, pressure Saudi Arabia & UAE to end the blockade on all Yemeni ports, send urgent humanitarian aid to the Yemeni people, and to urge Australia’s allies and assist to reconstruct Yemen.

You can sign the petition from here:

<https://www.change.org/p/scott-morrison-stop-australian-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia-and-united-arab-emirates>

## **Saudi authorities sport-wash their violations**

Despite Covid-19 pandemic that swept the world and forced many countries to cancel major events which have not been cancelled ever, Saudi Arabia had confirmed a number of major functions for 2021, as a part of their strategy to sport wash their violations. Saudi authorities

have been spending billions of dollars, for years, to host sporting, cultural, and entertainment events aiming to distract the international community from their human rights records.

For that purpose, Saudi authorities tried to make a deal with sports stars. The Tele

graph announced that the Portuguese football star Cristiano Ronaldo rejected an offer that would see his image be used on promotional material for Saudi tourism. The newspaper also reported that Saudi Arabia has also approached Barcelona's legend Lionel Messi for the same deal.

Rally Dakar was one of these events, being held in Jeddah miles away from the prison of Dhahban where the female activists are detained, ill-treated, and tortured.