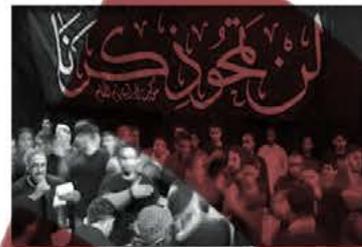




# **Bahrain:** **Absence of Religious Tolerance (2)** **Report on the violations of Ashura** **1444 AH - 2022 AD** **and other violations of religious** **freedoms**



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For Democracy and Human Rights

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BAHRAIN FORUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

**Bahrain: Absence of Religious Tolerance (2)**  
**Report on the violations of Ashura 144 AH - 2022 AD**  
**and other violations of religious freedoms**

**November 2022**

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## **Table of Contents**

### **5 Introduction**

### **6 Summary of the violations**

### **8 Section 1: Ashura-related violations**

8 . Prevention of religious tourism during Ashura season

8 . Deprivation of travel to visit the holy shrines, and restrictions on the returnees from the “Fourty/Arbaeen” pilgrimage.

9 . The case of Mr. Majid Al-Misha’l, the scholar.

10 . Violations of security forces in different areas during Ashura

14 . Violations of prisons during Ashura season

### **16 Section 2: Violations extended to religious freedoms in other religious occasions**

16 . Violations of security forces in occasions other than Ashura

19 . Violations of prisons during Al-Ghadeer Eid

### **20 Recommendations**

## **Summary of the violations**

Ashura season of year 1444 AH (2022 AD) witnessed a number of violations between 28 June 2022 and 28 September 2022. The violations that are practised every year during Ashura were practised this year in addition to preventing some citizens from visiting the holy shrines in Iraq on the occasion of the 'Arba'een/fourty' as well as imposing restrictions on those who returned from the 'Arba'een'.

This report studies the number and details of the violations practised during Ashura season in addition to the violations that affected the religious freedoms, in general, during the period mentioned above, and which were observed by independent law institutions.

## **Summary of the violations**

As each year, the Bahraini government failed at protecting religious freedom and the right to practise the religious rites during Ashura season for the year of 1444 AH – 2022 AD. This year's violations were varied and differed from last year's in terms of targeting, targets, and targeted groups. The targeting was not limited to Bahrain. Rather, it expanded to include travellers to the holy shrines in Iraq, who were restricted before and after their travel and even outside Bahrain. The most prominent of these cases was the case of Mr. Majid Al-Misha'l, who was affected by the violation in the State of Kuwait, based on an official document issued by a Bahraini government agency. In addition to preventing some visitors from Arab countries from coming to Bahrain to participate in the Ashura commemoration.

Among the most prominent forms of emerging violations, are those that were committed in Jaw Central Prison, where the targeting of Shiites was not limited to the followers of the Shiite sect, but also the Sunnis who were prevented from participating in this Islamic occasion permanently. The prison administration was masterful in committing all kinds of malicious violations, such as cutting water and air-conditioning services during the establishment of councils only, as well as using profanity against some sacred symbols in Islam. Those in charge of the prison canteen/kitchen also participated in restricting detainees residing for Ashura activities.

However, as for the various regions of Bahrain, the forms of violations that are committed every year on this occasion were repeated, such as monitoring and

photographing the participants in the councils, slapping processions, and removing Ashura banners in some areas.

The violations committed during Ashura season were accompanied by other violations that extended to religious freedoms.

The total of the violations committed against religious freedoms and which were observed by independent law organisations was (75) during shura season and other occasions between 28 June and 28 September 2022, grouped as follows:

## **Group 1:**

### **Violations related to Ashura season**

(2) prevention of travel to visit the holy shrines and restrictions on the returnees from the 'Arba'een' pilgrimage.

(41) violations by security forces in different regions during Ashura

(9) violations of prisons during Ashura season.

## **Group 2:**

### **Violations extended to religious freedoms in other religious occasions**

(17) violations of security forces in various regions

(6) violations of prisons during Eid Al-Ghadeer.

## **Section 1: Violations related to Ashura season**

### **Prevention of religious travel during Ashura season**

On 27 July 2022, just before Ashura season, the minister of interiors Rashid bin Abdullah Aal Khalifah said that Bahrain will not welcome any abroad religious campaigns to participate in celebrating Ashura. Additionally, he said that celebrating Ashura in the country is restricted to citizens as this contradicts with the Bahraini privacy in celebrating the occasions and its distinctive character. However, the minister did not refer to any legal or constitutional document that gives the ministry the permission to practise this restriction. The minister's words came after advertisements were circulated for Kuwaiti religious campaigns to travel to Bahrain to participate in the Ashura season. In a contradictory position to this decision, the government claims that "Bahrain is a state of religious tolerance and encourages the establishment of religious activities of different religions and sects, and allows foreign visitors to visit the country and participate in such ceremonies!" In addition, a number of Kuwaiti religious singers who participated in the mourning processions in Bahrain were prevented from participating in the Ashura season, forcing them to leave the country voluntarily!

### **Deprivation of travel to visit the holy shrines, and restrictions on returnees from the "Arba'een" pilgrimage**

A number of citizens were prevented from visiting the holy shrines in Iraq, specifically prior to the "Arba'een" occasion on 17 September 2022, forcing them to travel to Iraq indirectly. Additionally, some citizens who returned from the "Arba'een" visit faced some restriction. Most of them refrained from publishing their names, while the case of Mr. Majid Al-Mish'al, who did not obtain official approval

to travel to the city of Najaf in Iraq, was documented in flagrant violation of the freedom to practice religious rites, so he made four attempts to travel indirectly to Iraq without official permission from the official authorities in Bahrain , until he was able to travel on the fourth attempt. On 9 September 2022, Sheikh Maytham Al-Salman was prevented from traveling to visit the holy shrines in Iraq from Bahrain Airport three times on the same day.

### **The case of the scholar Sayyid Majid Al-Mish'al:**

In details, and in the first attempt, he tried to travel by land from the King Fahd Bridge to Saudi Arabia, from which he would travel to Kuwait and then to Najaf. But he was prevented from entering Saudi Arabia for logistical reasons (he was carrying only dollars, not the Saudi riyals).

The second attempt was when he tried to travel through Bahrain International Airport to Kuwait, with the intention of going from Kuwait to Najaf. But upon his arrival at Kuwait airport, he was interrogated for a long time at the Passport Department, and then he was informed that the 'Jazeera' airline refused to board him on the grounds that he was prohibited from leaving his country. He was forced to return to Bahrain via 'Gulf Air'.

On the third time, he tried again to travel to Kuwait through Bahrain airport, but at Bahrain airport he was asked about his destination after Kuwait, and he replied that he would stay in Kuwait, but the tickets indicated that he would travel to Najaf; therefore, he was confronted. He replied that he went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as he has made all the necessary procedures for travel, and that the ministry mentioned in its last report only "security precautions" from traveling as they have lifted the travel ban on him. He was reassured about his security situation and therefore could travel to Najaf. However, he was not allowed to travel.

On the fourth time, he became very anxious after the previous attempts failed, so he tried to travel to Amman first, and from there he went to Najaf. So he changed his appearance and dress so that he would not be recognized; so would his destination to Najaf. His attempt succeeded.

On his return to Bahrain, he returned via Al Jazeera Airways, which this time allowed him to board its plane, so he first headed to Kuwait and from there to Bahrain. He was asked at Bahrain Airport which country he came from, and he answered from Kuwait.

• **Violations of the security forces in various areas in Ashura**

The number of violations that were monitored and committed by the security forces against Ashura events in various regions reached (41) violations, similar in form to the violations that occur every year during this occasion, as most of them provoked the participants in the events by photographing them, observing them closely and asking them to show their papers sometimes.

<b>Violations of the security forces in Ashura</b>			
region	date	Number of violations	Details
A'ali	2022/6/28	1	The security forces removed the requirements for hanging the Hussein banners and the Ashura rituals
Distan	2022/07/03	1	The security forces removed the requirements for hanging the Hussein banners and the Ashura rituals
A'ali	2022/07/04	2	The security forces removed the requirements for hanging the Hussein banners in the main road and at Martyr Ja'far Ma'youf roundabout

Al-Shakhoura	2022/07/17	1	The security forces removed the requirements for hanging the Ashura banners
'Abu sbei	2022/07/17	1	The security forces removed the requirements for hanging the Ashura banners
Al-Shakhoura	2022/07/19	1	Confiscation of Ashura banners and banners
'Abu Sbei	2022/07/19	1	Confiscation of Ashura banners and banners
Madinat 4 <sup>th</sup> – Hamad circle	2022/07/27	1	Harassment of citizens who install Ashura rituals
Al-marakh	2022/07/28	1	A security patrol photographed the Ashura banners
Iskaan A'ali	2022/07/30	1	A security patrol monitored the attendance at the A'ali housing funeral
Saar	2022/07/31	1	The security forces removed the Hussein banners from the center of the area and from the lampposts
Madinat 4 <sup>th</sup> – Hamad circle	2022/07/31	1	A security patrol filmed the participants in the Ashura mourning procession
Madinat 4 <sup>th</sup> – Hamad circle	2022/08/01	2	A security patrol filmed the participants in the Ashura mourning procession during the day + then another patrol monitored the participants in the Zanjil mourning procession during the evening
'Al-maqsha	2022/08/01	1	A security patrol monitored the participants in the Ashura mourning procession as a provocative move
A'ali	2022/08/02	1	Removing Ashura banners and banners (from lighting poles)
Madinat 4 <sup>th</sup> – Hamad circle	2022/08/02	2	A security patrol removed the Ashura banners + a security patrol provoked the participants in the Ashura mourning council by stopping their cars and asking to show their identification papers
Al-Houra	2022/08/03	1	Removing the Ashura banners

Al-malkiyeh	2022/08/03	2	Removing the Ashura banners + two civilian security patrols photographed the participants in the mourning procession
Madinat salmaan	2022/08/03	1	Removing the Ashura banners and banners (from traffic lights and roundabouts)
Madinat 4 <sup>th</sup> – Hamad circle	2022/08/03	1	A security patrol filmed the participants in the Ashura mourning council
A'ali	2022/08/03	1	A security patrol monitored the participants in the Ashura mourning council
Al-hajar	2022/08/04	1	Appointing an element of the security forces to station at the southern door of Matam Al-Hajar and monitor attendance
Madinat 4 <sup>th</sup> – Hamad circle	2022/08/04	1	A security patrol monitored the participants in the Ashura mourning procession
A'ali	2022/08/05	1	The presence of an element of the security forces directly at the funeral of Hajji Hassan and the monitoring of the participants in the council
Distan	2022/08/05	1	A security patrol filmed the participants in the Ashura mourning procession
Al-hillah	2022/08/06	1	Members of the security forces monitored the participants in the Ashura mourning assembly
Madinat 4 <sup>th</sup> – Hamad circle	2022/08/06	1	Members of the security forces monitored the participants in the Ashura mourning assembly
Al-marakh	2022/08/06	1	Members of the security forces monitored the participants in the Ashura mourning assembly
Madinat 4 <sup>th</sup> – Hamad circle	2022/08/07	1	Members of the security forces filmed the participants in the Ashura ceremonies
'Al-maqsha	2022/08/08	1	Members of the security forces monitored and photographed the participants in a mourning procession during the Ashura ceremonies

Al-diyyeh	2022/08/10	1	Members of the security forces monitored and photographed the participants in a mourning procession during the Ashura ceremonies, through security patrols on the ground and drones.
A'ali	2022/08/11	1	Members of the security forces closely monitored the participants in the mourning procession during the Ashura ceremonies
Sitrah – the village	2022/08/12	1	Members of the security forces closely monitored the participants in the mourning procession during the Ashura ceremonies
Saar	2022/08/16	1	Members of the security forces removed the Ashura banners and banners
Madinat Hamad – 4 <sup>th</sup> circle	2022/08/25	1	Members of the security forces removed the Ashura banners and banners
A'ali	2022/08/26	1	Members of the security forces removed the Ashura banners and banners
'Abu sbei	2022/09/24	1	Members of the security forces removed the Ashura flag
<b>Total</b>			<b>41</b>

## Prison violations during the Ashura season

Activities commemorating Ashura in Bahrain's prisons have been targeted and prisoners of conscience launching these events have been harassed, through several forms that reflected maliciousness in dealing with the freedom to practise religious rites within the Shiite community in particular. In addition to preventing the detainees from completing the commemoration of the occasion until after the tenth of Muharram and using derogatory sectarian words, the prison administration deliberately cut off the water and air conditioning, specifically during the periods of performing rituals, and deprived the Sunni detainees from participating permanently in the occasion. The canteen also participated in the violation by refusing to sell the detainees supplies for commemorating the occasion. The total number of violations that were monitored reached (9) that led to clashes between detainees and policemen in some cases.

Violations of the security forces in Ashura			
region	date	Number of violations	Details
Jaw Central Prison	2022/07/29	1	The canteen refrains from selling supplies and groceries that are used and consumed on the occasion of Ashura. When the detainees are asked about the reason, they were told that the sale of these materials will be resumed after the end of the Ashura occasion.

Jaw Central Prison	2022/07/30	4	Water and air conditioning were cut off in all buildings for 8 hours a day during the Ashura rituals period + TV channels were closed during the broadcast of the Ashura councils + Limiting the number of participants in the celebration, as the number was reduced to less than half of the detainees in each building sometimes + A sectarian decision was taken to deprive the detainees: those who belong to the Sunni sect were allowed to participate in the commemoration of Ashura after they used to participate in it every year, and the decision was implemented by removing the Sunni detainees from the buildings during the celebration and then returning them after the celebration ended. After the Ashura event ended, the water and air-conditioning cuts and all restrictions on celebrating the occasion stopped
Jaw Central Prison	2022/07/30	1	Detaining the detainees of Building No. 7 (formerly 15) from practising religious rituals on the occasion of Ashura, even inside the cells, during each period of the occasion that exceeds 10 days, which began on July 30
Jaw Central Prison	2022/07/30	1	Denying the detainees of Building No. 19) 4 formerly), wards 2 and 3, from practising part of the Ashura rituals by preventing the transfer of some of the detainees to them
Jaw Central Prison	2022/08/09	2	Depriving the detainees of all buildings from completing the Ashura commemoration, removing the Ashura banners and breaking the pulpit that the detainees made from materials they bought from the canteen, in addition to degrading sectarian expressions by the police when they broke down the pulpit, such as "Hussain's time is over." This prompted the detainees to protest by returning the food and refraining from going out to the prison courtyard (Al-Fans) demanding that they be allowed to resume the celebration + as a result, a clash occurred between the detainees and the police in Building 10 and they were denied communication for 5 days
<b>Total</b>			<b>9</b>

## Section Two: Violations of Religious Freedom on Other Religious Occasions

### • Violations of the security forces of religious freedoms on occasions other than Ashura

The security services committed violations of religious freedoms, specifically the occasion of Eid al-Ghadir and the “Salaam Ya Mahdi” activities in various regions of Bahrain, coinciding with the start of violations against the Ashura season.

The total number of those violations that were monitored, but not those affecting the Ashura activities, amounted to (17), (5) of which were related to the Eid Al-Ghadeer occasion, (11) of them were the Salaam Ya Mahdi’ events, and (one) of them was the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Muhammad Al-Jawad (peace be upon him).

Violations of the security forces in Ashura				
region	date	Number of violations	Occasion	Details
Madinat – Hamad 4 <sup>th</sup> circle	2022/06/28	1	death anniversary	The oldest elements of the security services provoked citizens who were celebrating a religious occasion, the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (peace be upon him), as they were holding a funeral and a slapping procession, by photographing the participants in the procession.

Adlder	2022/07/12	1	Salaam Ya Mahdi	Prevention of Salaam Ya Mahdi
Baryar	2022/07/14	1	Eid Al-Ghadeer	Removal of decoration of Eid Al-Ghadeer off poles.
Al-draz	2022/07/15	1	Eid Al-Ghadeer	Removal of decoration of Eid Al-Ghadeer off 'falasteen' meighbourhood
Al-draz	2022/07/16	1	Salaam Ya Mahdi	The Ministry of the Interior threatens the custodian of the Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) mosque in an area by contacting him, with his imprisonment if he opens the mosque to perform the chant "Peace, Mahdi" on the blessed day of Eid al-Ghadir
Sitra- the outer	2022/07/17	1	Eid Al-Ghadeer	Members of the security forces, in civilian clothes, photographed the citizens participating in the Eid Al-Ghadeer celebration
Sitra-valleys	2022/07/17	1	Eid Al-Ghadeer	Members of the security forces, in civilian clothes, photographed the citizens participating in the Eid Al-Ghadeer celebration
Sitra	2022/07/17	1	Eid Al-Ghadeer	Members of the security forces photographed citizens installing decorations and flags in celebration of the blessed Eid Al-Ghadeer at the funeral of Imam Hussein (peace be upon him) with the support of a helicopter
Manama	2022/07/17	2	Salaam Ya Mahdi	Security forces stopped citizens' cars and revoked their driving licenses for playing the "Salam Ya Mahdi" chant in cars + and their cars were confiscated for 7 days

Manama	2022/07/18	1	Salaam Ya Mahdi	Security alert in the streets of the capital, monitoring cars playing the song "Salam Ya, Mahdi"
Al-draz	2022/07/18	2	Salaam Ya Mahdi	Security forces stopped citizens' cars and revoked their driving licenses for playing the "Salam Ya Mahdi" chant in cars + and their cars were confiscated for 7 days
Al-der	2022/07/18	2	Salaam Ya Mahdi	Security forces stopped citizens' cars and revoked their driving licenses for playing the "Salam Ya Mahdi" chant in cars + and their cars were confiscated for 7 days
Sitra	2022/07/18	2	Salaam Ya Mahdi	Security forces stopped citizens' cars and revoked their driving licenses for playing the "Salam Ya Mahdi" chant in cars + and their cars were confiscated for 7 days
<b>Total</b>				<b>17</b>

## Prison violations on Eid Al-Ghadeer

Jaw Central Prison witnessed (6) collective violations that were monitored on the occasion of Eid Al-Ghadeer, which the prison administration committed by depriving the prisoners of conscience from celebrating the occasion and the violent assault by the prison police on the detainees who protested against this deprivation, which amounted to beating with batons and spraying hot pepper spray. In addition to the general deprivation of communication for several days, and the isolation of some detainees in solitary confinement.

region	date	Number of violations	Details
Jaw Central Prison	2022/07/18	2	15) 7 Denying the detainees of Building formerly) from practicing religious rites, celebrating the Greater Ghadeer Day + which prompted the detainees to protest by sit-in in the corridors of the building and refused to enter the cells. , which caused fainting cases among the detainees
Jaw Central Prison	2022/07/18	4	The detainees of Building 10, Ward 1, Cell 8, were beaten with batons and pepper sprayed on them by the prison police + in addition to being deprived of communication for 6 days + and some of them were placed in solitary confinement. All because someone asked why they were denied the celebration of Eid al-Ghadir + those who were isolated in solitary were deprived of the necessities of prayer (a rug and a disc) and of access to clean clothes. Participated in the assault on the detainees, policemen: Marwan and Ahmed Salem
<b>Total</b>		<b>6</b>	

## Recommendations

1. The government of Bahrain should stop targeting and sectarian discrimination, and not restrict the practice of religious rites, including during the Ashura season, in all areas, including prisons.
2. Enact laws and legislation that criminalize the infringement of religious rites, and hold those who violate these rights to account.
3. Non-interference in the affairs of religious institutions that are committed to the law and the constitution, in a manner that guarantees freedom of religious practice within the framework of public order.
4. Public declaration by member states of the Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner of the right of Shiite citizens to exercise freedom of religion and belief in Bahrain without restrictions.
5. To hold accountable those involved in violating religious freedoms, especially with regard to the Ashura season.
6. Issuing legislation criminalizing religious discrimination in various state institutions.
7. Ensure that religious activities without discrimination receive appropriate media coverage in the official media.
8. The right to freedom of travel and movement for citizens and residents inside and outside the country and the removal of obstacles and harassment in exercising this right, especially visiting holy shrines abroad.
9. To stop preventing foreigners from visiting Bahrain in the context of religious tourism when they are committed to the public order of the state.



Ashura season of year 1444 AH (2022 AD) witnessed a number of violations between 28 June 2022 and 28 September 2022. The violations that are practised every year during Ashura were practised this year in addition to preventing some citizens from visiting the holy shrines in Iraq on the occasion of the 'Arba'een/fourty' as well as imposing restrictions on those who returned from the 'Arba'een'.

This report studies the number and details of the violations practised during Ashura season in addition got the violations that affected the religious freedoms, in general, during the period mentioned above, and which were observed by independent law institutions.