

Peek on Bahrain's Human Rights Violations in 2022



The Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR)

is a non-profit and non-governmental organization based in Australia. Its primary objective is the promotion of the culture of democracy. It also focuses on establishing human rights and social justice principles and halting violations in Gulf states.

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GIDHR aspires to be a voice among major organizations defending democratic and human rights principles by contributing to achieving peace and justice for all in the Gulf states.



Jan uary

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Crackdown on Activists Continues

Front Line Defenders revealed that the phones of two women human rights defenders from Bahrain and Jordan were hacked using NSO Group's notorious Pegasus spyware. Researchers at Front Line Defenders examined the mobile device of the human rights defender Ebtisam Al-Saegh, and found that her iPhone had been hacked at least eight times between August and November 2019 with NSO Group's Pegasus spyware.

Bahraini authorities have previously harassed Al-Saegh. On March 20, 2017, authorities detained her for seven hours at Bahrain International Airport upon her return from the 34th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. They thoroughly searched her, interrogated her for five hours, and confiscated her passport and mobile device. The interrogator accused her of delivering false statements about Bahraini human rights violations while in Geneva.

Bahraini Opponent & Asylum Seeker, Ahmad Jaafar, Extradited to Bahrain

Despite a decision by the European Court of Human Rights to suspend his extradition, the Serbian authorities handed over Ahmad Jaafar, a Bahraini dissident wanted by the Bahraini authorities. The European Court of Human Rights had decided to postpone the extradition until 25 February, but the Serbian

authorities extradited Ahmad in the early hours of 24 January. According to the Belgrade Centre, the European Court of Human Rights has asked Serbian officials to «take into account the possibility of torture and other inhuman treatment and whether he was allowed to apply for asylum by February 11». However, the Belgrade Higher and Appeals Courts and the Justice Minister believed all the requirements for the man's extradition were fulfilled.

The Guardian newspaper said that the extradition happened in cooperation with Interpol, in the first test for the international policing organization under the presidency of a top Emirati security official.

«Interpol and Serbian authorities have put a man who fled torture and life in a Bahraini prison and sought refuge in Europe at grave risk,» said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. «It is terrifying and inexcusable that Serbia and Interpol collaborated to return a dissident to face life in prison despite the European Court of Human Rights order halting his extradition.»

Summonses and Arrests

The National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR) denied the presence of any political prisoners in Bahrain. In mid-January, the institution's president, Ali Ahmad Al-Durazi, said that the kingdom did not arrest any citizen over his political activism. However, statistics show that there have been more than 20,000 arbitrary arrests of citizens from 2011 until the middle of last year, including 1,716 children and more than 300 women.

Moreover, Amnesty International issued a statement on December 6, 2021, saying «10 days before National Day of Bahrain, we urge the King to put an end to the cruel and unjust punishments against prisoners of conscience and to order their immediate and unconditional release.» Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch said in a statement on 15 January 2021 «Bahrain

has one of the highest incarceration rates per capita in the Middle East.» Those statements confirm the presence of political detainees in the kingdom.

International Calls

A group of British MPs raise alarm over Bahrain's human rights record. They criticized torture, collective sentences and human rights and religious freedoms violations in the kingdom.

Former opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn criticized the mass trials that go on in Bahrain indicating that 167 people were sentenced in one day in 2019. He further added that many of the people put on trial have confessed under torture, duress, or pressure to crimes they did not commit, or in some cases could not have committed. He called to talk with the Bahraini embassy on cases of political detainees.

MP Brendan O'Hara said that «while the UK sends more and more taxpayers' cash to Bahrain, the old repression and detention of political prisoners in Bahrain continues.» He shed light on the cases of Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace and Mr Hasan Mushaima.

MP Peter Bottomley criticized the continued torture, questioning the efficiency of reforms taken by Bahrain and supported by Britain. He said «one has to say that Bahrain has much further progress to make. Its legal and justice systems will work better when torture is ended.»

MP Jim Shannon, concerned in religious freedom affairs, criticized the regime demolishing of 36 Shia Muslim mosques. Despite promising they would rebuild the mosques, that has yet to occur after more than a decade. The Bahraini Government used covid-19 as an excuse to crack down on civil society's freedom of religion and practice of religious rites.

The Democratic Senator Ben Cardin from Maryland called for the release of all political prisoners in Bahrain, especially Dr Abduljalil Al-Singace, where he said that «No one may be held behind bars for exercising the internationally guaranteed rights to freedom of expression and association.»

Covid Outbreaks inside the Country's Prisons

As covid 19 recorded cases in Bahrain rise, fears of another outbreak in the kingdom's prisons increase. Those fears arise especially after a large number of detainees at Jaw Central Prison suffer from covid-like symptoms, including fever, high temperature, cough, shortness of breath...

From its side, the prison administration didn't take any measures to ensure the prisoner's safety. All that was done was conducting rapid tests for a group of detainees who suffered from the previously mentioned symptoms, without even informing them with the results. The families of those detainees raised their voices calling for conducting PCR tests for their sons and announcing the results officially on the Health Ministry website.

Violations Against Detainees Never End

Early January, political detainees at Jaw Central Prison confirmed that the prisoner of conscience Yasser Ahmad is in bad health conditions, where he is unable to move properly. They added that he has been suffering for months from dizziness and other health problems.

The detainee Khalil Al-Saffar has also been denied access to medical treatment. He suffers from severe headaches after

a fall that aggravated an existing skull injury. The prison's administration refused to transfer him to the hospital.

Furthermore, the political prisoner Joumaa Nasser said that Jaw Prison administration deliberately prevented him from taking his high school exams, because he complained about their ill-treatment. Nasser added that the prison administration took him on 29 December to the visiting building, where he was scheduled to sit an exam, and that he remained there, along with others, from 8:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. without doing the exam. He was returned to the building at 5 p.m. He further added that he was deprived of doing five exams due to his transfer to solitary confinement.

On the other hand, a group of political prisoners has been held in the isolation rooms for long periods, in which in some cases exceeded six months. Therefore, on 24 January, a group of inmates in Jaw Prison refused to receive breakfast meals in protest to the continued isolation of that group.

Meanwhile, minor Sayed Redha Fadhul was literally moments away from freedom when he was unexpectedly returned to prison. Fadhul was in the process of being paroled and completed the entire procedure for his release, even testing negative for Covid 19, before being returned to the Dry Dock prison. It remains unknown why the authorities had a sudden change of heart.



Feb ruary

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Arrests and Raids

On the eleventh anniversary of the peaceful demonstrations, Bahraini authorities added a series of violations to its human rights record, with more than 200 human rights violations in the second and third weeks of February being monitored.

During the period from 8 to 21 February, 28 arrest cases were documented, including child Ali Mohsen Al-Arab, and Mrs. Fadeela Abdulrasoul, and 11 summonses were recorded.

The cases of arrests and extended detention pending investigation reached 21, including 14 arrest cases and 13 cases of extended detention, including 8 children. 16 of the cases were supposed to be referred to the High Court and 5 to the Public Prosecution. Moreover, 140 raids were carried out in 42 areas, including 5 cases of house raids, 5 cases of checkpoints deployment and 2 of street blockade.

A Female Political Prisoner Case Was Recorded

On 26 April 2021, the last female political prisoner in Bahrain, Mrs. Zakia Al-Barboury was released. However, this situation did not last long; on 14 February 2022, Mrs. Fadeela Abdulrasoul was arrested.

The arrest of the 52-old woman came hours after her husband, Radhi Ali Musa, and his brother, Jaafar Ali Musa, were arrested. The three were arrested over charges of covering up a prisoner of conscience, Sayed Mahmoud Ali Al-Alawi, who the regime claimed that he had escaped the psychiatry before he was re-

arrested. Al-Alawi was brutally tortured by Bahraini security forces, driven to insanity following his arrest in 2020, and eventually ended up in a psychiatric hospital.

Days after the arrest, the Public Prosecution rejected a request demanding the release of the family of convict Mahmoud Ali Al-Alawi and extended their arrest for 15 additional days. And on 28 February, Mrs. Fadeela was released.

Covid Outbreaks inside the Country's Prisons

Another outbreak of Covid-19 in Bahrain's prisons arose and underscored the urgent need to release all political prisoners. On 7 February, at least two political prisoners tested positive for the virus. The two sick detainees have been identified as Salman Abbas Al-Ismael and Mohamed Ahmed Ali. The families of both men have expressed concern over their wellbeing.

On 18 February, GIDHR had received information of recording at least 22 new coronavirus cases in Jaw Prison. Moreover, the infected detainees were being isolated without access to medical care. The number of cases rose rapidly to record nearly 200 covid cases on 21 February. Those who tested positive were denied access to phone calls with their families.

Former Members of Opposition Parties Denied Participation in Civil Society

The Ministry of Labor and Social Development has sent a letter to the Bahrain Human Rights Society rejecting the candidacy of: Mr. Abduljalil Yousef; Lawyer Issa Ibrahim; and Mr. Mohsen Matar, on the pretext that they are former members of the National Democratic Action Society Waad.

Amnesty International described Bahrain's move to ban the three individuals from running for the 2022/2023 presidency of

the Bahrain Human Rights Society as appalling. “Under Bahrain’s system of ‘free elections,’ things are so free that members of formerly legal opposition parties now outlawed by the government cannot even participate in civil society,” Amnesty said in a Twitter post.

Crackdown on Activists Continues

Red Line for Gulf and the Citizen Lab issued a new report in which it documented that the Bahraini government used the Pegasus program to spy on prominent lawyer Mohammed Al-Tajer, psychologist Sharifa Siwar and a Bahraini journalist, whose name was not mentioned.

The report revealed that Al-Tajer’s phone had been hacked with NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware at least three times in September 2021, starting on the 2nd of September 2021, and ending on the 27th of September 2021. Al-Tajer’s phone was hacked while running iOS 14, and the phone does not appear to have been hacked after he updated it to iOS 15.0.2 in October 2021. Evidence of the hack on Mohammed Al-Tajer’s phone included records showing that three processes were run on the phone in September 2021 that were linked to NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware with high confidence.

However, Dr. Siwar’s iPhone was hacked with Pegasus on June 10, 2021, while she was still in Bahrain. The hack took place one month after she was pardoned by the King. Evidence of the hack on Dr. Siwar’s phone includes records showing that a process was run on the phone in June 2021 that we link to NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware with high confidence.



March

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Violations Against Detainees Never End

In mid-March, the political prisoner Ali Al-Haje wrote to Lewis Hamilton explaining how the seven-times champion had made a difference. «Your genuine concern about these cases has changed the way prisoners think of this sport,» he wrote in the letter sent to Hamilton.

«The prisoners view you not only as a world sports champion but as someone who is defending their human rights... To us, you are our champ, not only the best in driving but also a human being who cares about the suffering of others,” the letter further added.

Medical Negligence: Another Tool to Punish Political Prisoners

The political prisoner Husain Ali Al-Sahlawi suffers from pneumonia (long-term breathing problems) following a Covid infection. Al-Sahlawi was taken to the clinic at Jaw Prison and then hospitalized but returned to prison and denied access to medication.

Ali Hasan Hammad, a political prisoner, started a hunger strike on 20 March demanding access to medical care. His wife explained that on 24 January, Ali fell on his back in the bathroom and was transferred by the ambulance to Al-Qalaa clinic, but he did not receive proper treatment and was then returned to prison. «He is now suffering from severe pain that affected his walk.... He underwent more than one surgery before he entered prison, and as a result of the torture he was subjected to during detention, his situation worsened, and after his fall his condition became serious and not likely to be medically neglected.» The prison's administration responded to Ali's call, 2 days after his hunger strike, and he ended his strike by getting a doctor's appointment.

Detainee Issa Abdullah Al-Samahiji is also being denied desperately needed medical treatment after losing consciousness in late March. Al-Samahiji suffers from multiple illnesses and was taken to both the prison clinic and Al-Salmaniya hospital, however, he was quickly returned to his cell without any improvement in his condition.

Restrictions Increased Against Leader Hasan Mushaima

The activist and son of detained leader Hasan Mushaima, Ali Mushaima, revealed that his father has been in solitary confinement at the Kanoo Health Center for 8 months under the cover of «medical follow-ups,» noting that he is being neglected and deprived of basic rights, some of which he was receiving in Jaw Central Prison.

He explained that the authorities' restrictions against his father have increased significantly since he refused parole in September,

noting that he was denied contact with his family six months ago. Ali further added that his father still has several health problems without serious treatment, despite being transferred to Kanoo Health Center in July 2021.

Arrests and Summonses

Summonses are often used in Bahrain as a tool for harassment of activists and protesters. Ali Muhanna is a victim of authorities' harassment who has been summoned multiple times over his participation in protests calling for the release of his son. On 28 March, he was summoned for questioning over 'calling for prayers' at the Al Alawiyat Mosque. The mosque was one of at least 30 religious and heritage sites destroyed as part of Bahrain's violent crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in 2011.

Moreover, one of the well-known anti-government protesters, Abdulmajeed Abdulla Hasan, was briefly arrested by security forces on 17 March. The authorities summoned Haj Majid for investigation over charges of taking part in unlicensed gatherings. Abdulmajeed, nicknamed Haji Smood, has been jailed and interrogated multiple times for taking part in peaceful anti-government protests.

International Calls

On 29 March, Amnesty International released its annual report for 2021 in which it accused Bahraini authorities of continuing to commit serious human rights violations, including torture and other forms of ill-treatment. The organization confirmed that "as in past years, detainees and their families gave accounts of torture in state detention centres." The report also said that Bahrain is continuing to suppress freedom of expression and assembly, while several activists had their devices hacked by Pegasus spyware.

From its side, the Bahrain Press Association (BPA) emphasized in a report that dissidents, civil society activists in Bahrain and those prevented by the political isolation law from engaging in civil or political activity have become unable to express their stances and comment on internal affairs, except through equivocal words and indirectly.

Furthermore, the Committee on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations confirmed that the Bahraini authorities are restricting Shiite access to several religious and cultural sites, as well as harassing, intimidating, arresting and detaining religious and cultural figures, which is said to be discrimination practiced against Shia in education, employment, and the exercise of their cultural rights.



April

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Medical Negligence: Another Tool to Punish Political Prisoners

The family of detainee Ali Matooq revealed that the ongoing denial of medical treatment to Ali is threatening his life. His sister, Jehan, stated that Ali's migraines have turned into seizures which led to asphyxiation during sleep and Jaw Prison's administration is refusing to grant him access to a specialist or even the prison clinic.

The political prisoner Mohammad Abdul-Amir suffered on 22 April from a seizure in which it almost killed him, he was then transferred to the hospital. Noting that Mohammad has been suffering from long-term medical negligence in which it led to the deterioration of his health.

In an audio recording, the detainee Hussein Khalaf said that he was "dragged like an animal" and subjected to psychological and physical abuse for demanding access to the prison clinic. For his part, the detainee Hussain Ali Al-Sahlawi says the prison doctor is prescribing him different medication after every check-up and is unable or unwilling to offer a concrete diagnosis. Hussain is suffering from multiple complications after being infected with Coronavirus.

In addition, the political prisoner Youssef Hussain is being deprived of timely treatment for his diabetes, where his access to insulin shots is being deliberately delayed.

The political prisoner Abdul Aziz Abdul Reda Issa is also being deprived of access to medical treatment as he suffers from severe pain in his lower abdomen following a hernia diagnosis.

Detainees in Al-Qurain Prison are also suffering from medical negligence, where detainee Fadhel Abbas launched a hunger strike in early April protesting his lack of access to proper medical treatment.

Summonses and Arrests

Since 2011, the activist Ali Muhanna has been subjected to an unprecedented level of harassment by Bahraini security forces which repeatedly summoned him. On 6 April, Muhanna was questioned by security forces over taking part in peaceful protests and calling for the release of political prisoners including his son. Ali and a dozen of citizens including Abdulmajeed Abdulla Hasan were summoned for their participation in Sanabis' peaceful sit-in.

In mid-April, activist Ali Muhanna spent another day being questioned by police over his participation in protests dating back to March and February. Muhanna was one of 15 people interrogated.

On 29 April, both Ali Muhanna and Abdulmajeed Abdulla Hasan were summoned for questioning by police over their alleged participation in peaceful events.

International Calls

In early April, the situation of prisoner of conscience Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja had dramatically worsened after the prison administration imposed a series of punitive measures against him, including denying him contact with his family.

Front Line Defenders called for the release of Al-Khawaja and indicated that “between January 2022 and April 2022, necessary medical treatment was actively withheld from Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja by the Bahraini authorities, and access to medical appointments was denied.” The rights group further stated that “since January 2022, he has been prevented from attending at least two scheduled appointments concerning his deteriorating eyesight and a third appointment concerning his chronic back and hip pain.”

Amnesty International expressed concern over the health of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and called on Bahrain to “immediately ensure he receives the medical treatment and care he needs.” The organization added that “Bahrain’s prison system is marred by regular instances of denial of medical care, delay, and arbitrary exercise of authority, which in specific cases rise to the level of intentional ill-treatment.”

The US Embassy in Bahrain urged Bahrain to abide by its international commitments to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. The embassy further said that “we continue to urge Bahrain to ensure fair and transparent judicial proceedings and abide by its international commitments to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and the press.”

From its side, an annual US State Department report on Human Rights practices cites credible reports of torture, life-threatening prison conditions, arbitrary detention, as well as restrictions on free expression and political participation in Bahrain. Among those are allegations that Bahraini minors, sometimes younger than 15, were beaten and subjected to other forms of ill-treatment while in custody.



May

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Medical Negligence: Another Tool to Punish Political Prisoners

The prisoner of conscience Abed Ali Khair was assaulted for demanding access to medical treatment. "Today (on 12 May), they were supposed to take me to the clinic. I am suffering from gout & I can't stand on my own feet. One of the police officers attacked me. He hit me because I demanded to go to the clinic," Khair said.

The activist Ali Muhanna filed a complaint about his son's denial of medical treatment after he visited him for the first time in more than two years. Muhanna said he noticed that his son was experiencing severe pain in one of his knees and he did not receive medical treatment.

The political prisoner Mahmoud Abdul-Jabbar started a hunger strike in mid-May as a protest over his denial of medical treatment. Mahmoud suffers from sickle cell anemia and is being denied access to medical care.

Another young detainee housed in Dry Dock prison resorted to a hunger strike over his lack of access to medical treatment. Ali Issa started a hunger strike on 17 May as he suffers from a worsening ear condition, and his repeated demands for treatment are being ignored. He is also asking for clothes, which he hasn't received during his three years behind bars.

The prisoner of conscience Sayed Ali Alawi Hashem described the doctors at the Jaw Prison Clinic as a medical mafia, pointing

out that they insult sick prisoners. Hashem said during a phone call “those who present themselves as doctors at Jaw Prison clinic are in fact a medical mafia and lack the rules of dealing with patients. Sometimes the effects of their insults and indifference are more severe than the executioners’ whips.”

Crackdown on Activists Continues

Bahrain, which ranks 167th out of 180 countries in the world on the press freedom index, issued by Reporters without Borders, continues to harass activists. On 8 May, activist Ali Muhhana was summoned for investigation. He was questioned by police over his participation in several anti-government protests. Meanwhile, Abdulmajeed Abdulla Hasan, who was also interrogated on 8 May, said he was summoned for taking part in an International Quds day march.

On 10 May, the activist Ali Muhhana along with some family members of those killed by the kingdom’s security forces were summoned for investigation. Muhhana said he was interrogated by police again over a protest in Sitra that was organized over a month ago. The police also questioned the father of the late Ali Al-Sheikh and the brother of Sami Mushaima.

Harassment does not only target activists, but it surpasses their beloved ones. Bahraini lawyer Balqis Al-Manami shared her suffering with her child after the citizenship of the lawyer’s husband was revoked. She further explained that her child Sayed Ali Kassim is being deprived of attaining citizenship.

“Depriving my children of Bahraini citizenship due to the revocation of their father’s citizenship made his punishment reach me and my children, which is a violation of a constitutional principle, which is the principle of individual punishment,” Al-Manami added.



June

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Medical Negligence: Another Tool to Punish Political Prisoners

A new outbreak of Tuberculosis is recorded in Jaw Prison. The tuberculosis outbreak is just one case highlighting Bahraini authorities' continuous violation of their responsibilities towards political prisoners, especially that related to prisoners' health. The first tuberculosis case that appeared in the prison was former prisoner Ahmad Jaber. Ahmad had been suffering from symptoms of the disease in April 2021 but was not transferred to the hospital until December 2021. During January and February 2022, the prison administration cancelled all his medical appointments at Salmaniya Hospital but was forced to transfer him to the hospital following protest from Jaber's colleagues. After 70 days, tests showed the spread of tuberculosis and its effect on his neck, chest, and pelvis vertebrae. Prior to his release from prison, the Jaw administration did not take any special measures during the 70-day period to isolate him from the rest of the detainees.

After Jaber's release, a new prisoner's infection with tuberculosis was confirmed. On 2 June the Ministry of Health announced that the political prisoner Hasan Abdullah Habib had tuberculosis. Meanwhile, the Ministry did not mention those who contacted Hasan, although at that time, there were two additional inmates exhibiting symptoms but have not yet been confirmed.

According to Hasan's family, Hasan suffered a severe sickle seizure on May 9, and, as a result, was transferred to Salmaniya Medical Complex for treatment. He underwent medical examinations while being in the hospital. On May 30, it was found that he had contracted pulmonary tuberculosis. Hasan was returned to Jaw Prison on the same day the results of the tests came out without receiving the proper medication.

A week later, nine cases of tuberculosis have been tested positive with no official announcements. However, detainees were punished for exposing the spread of tuberculosis within the detention facility. Authorities imposed a 23-hour lockdown on sections housing political prisoners, and cell searches at late hours were carried out.

Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Amna Guellali, commented: "Bahrain's inadequate response to address cases of tuberculosis in prison shows a disturbing lack of concern for prisoners' health, and puts their right to health at grave risk. The prison authorities have stood by for too long in the face of the risk of further infections."

Violations Against Detainees Never End

On 8 June, at least five detainees, housed in Dry Dock Prison, were diagnosed with covid 19. The detainees were denied appropriate medical treatment and didn't receive enough food. The group names are Hussain Saeed, Hassan Abdulaziz, Hussain Taher, Ali Mahmoud, and Hussain Habib.

Moreover, the detainee Jassem Mohammad Quaid is being denied access to medical treatment despite his deteriorating health. He is suffering from swollen lymph nodes.

Detainee Mortada Mohammad Abdel Reda, who was hospitalized during May, had a planned surgery on 13 June. However, the surgery was delayed after the doctor tasked with the

operation cited another emergency. Mortada's health has been deteriorating after the drug regimen for his tuberculosis failed to produce results. Moreover, Salmaniya Hospital was instructed not to disclose information about the condition of Mortada and any other political prisoner hospitalized for tuberculosis. Therefore, the family of political prisoner Mortada Mohamed Abdel Reda has no idea about their son's health or whether the hospital performed the surgery.

The detainee Sayed Hasan Salman Fadhel started a hunger strike, in mid-June, in protest over his three-year-long stint at the "isolation building" in Dry Dock Prison.

Detainees at Dry Dock Prison also suffered during June from ill-treatment, where a group of them were pepper-sprayed and transferred to solitary confinement after demands to turn on the air conditioner.

Meanwhile, detainees at Jaw Prison also suffered during June from ill-treatment, most notably the brutal attack carried on political prisoners on 23 June that was caught on video by the facility's security cameras. The inmates were assaulted by riot police who stormed one of the buildings at the notoriously brutal prison. An unknown number of prisoners were then taken to an undisclosed location. After that incident, several detainees were cut off from the outside world and no calls had been received from them.



July

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Medical Negligence: Another Tool to Punish Political Prisoners

In early July, the political prisoner Ali Abbas Abdullah said that his condition has worsened due to treatment delays for severe knee pains. Ali had been deprived access to medical care for a long period.

On 6 July, the family of the political prisoner Hussein Al-Saadi announced that they had no information about their jailed son as his health deteriorated. Hussein, who suffers from a heart condition and has sickle cell anemia, was transferred to isolation. Al-Saadi's family said they asked authorities for information about Hussein, but no response was received.

The political prisoner Mohammad Hassan Al-Raml is being denied treatment for an injury he sustained after falling. The fall left Al-Raml unable to walk properly. Earlier July, Al-Raml spent more than a week on hunger strike over his lack of access to proper medical treatment and his medication.

Violations Against Detainees Never End

The prisoner Sadiq Shamlouh was thrown into solitary confinement for requesting to be moved away from dangerous inmates and those suffering from contagious illnesses.

At least three political prisoners in Jaw Prison were thrown into solitary confinement, on 19 July, following security forces raid on their building to break up a peaceful sit-in. The three are Hussein Al-Sahlawi, Hussein Mansour Khalifa, and Osama Al-Sagheer. Officers used pepper spray, resulting in one of the inmates who suffers from a heart condition hospitalized, and another with lost consciousness.

In mid-July, three detainees in Dry Dock prison launched hunger strikes in a stand against injustice and abysmal living conditions. One of the prisoners, the minor Hussein Taher Saed, says authorities have been ignoring his appeals to have his torn clothing and shoes replaced for years. Meanwhile, Ali Hussein Al-Tarifi and Ahmad Samea have exhausted all administrative avenues to secure a retrial but are continuing to demand their day in court to challenge their politically motivated convictions. The two were arbitrarily detained, held incommunicado, tortured, and convicted following an unfair trial.

Around 20 July, the political prisoner and former teacher Mohammad Sarhan was moved to a cell housing convicted criminals after taking part in a peaceful sit-in against restrictions on freedom of religion. Sarhan requested to be returned to his cell, however officers threatened him with violence.

On 18 July, Jaw Prison administration prevented detainees in buildings 7 and 10 from calls, family visits, and going to the prison yard, because they commemorated religious rites on "Eid Al-Ghadir". They were also pepper sprayed on their faces.

Moreover, in late July, detainees in Jaw Prison were explicitly ordered not to practice any religious rites as Ashura started. Several detainees confirmed that they were threatened by officers with violence if they perform religious rites during Ashura.

Crackdown on Activists Continues

On 21 July, Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa issued a royal decree appointing Khalifa bin Ahmed bin Abdulla Al Khalifa as President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA), instead of Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa. Mai's dismissal took place after her refusal to shake hands with the Israeli ambassador to Bahrain and for refusing to Judaize old neighborhoods in Manama. Although Mai had worked in culture and media for over 20 years and has been a controversial figure in the kingdom, she was fired when she opposed the kingdom's policies in normalization.

On 26 July, the writer and academic Dr. Nader Kadhim was dismissed from his position at the University of Bahrain. Kadhim's dismissal took place after 5 days of his arrest. His arrest on 21 July was stated by sources close to him, without any mention of the reasons for the arrest, while the Public Prosecution has remained silent so far with regards to the case. Some suggested that the reasons behind his arrest are his thoughts written in his recently published book. On 27 July, Dr. Nader was released while reasons behind his detention were kept unknown.

On the other hand, the daughter of Sheikh Isa Qassim was prevented, in mid-July, from traveling to Iran to visit her father. The cleric's daughter and other members of her family were turned back at the Dubai airport under the pretext that they lacked a permit from the Interior Ministry.

In addition, one of the most prominent protesters Haji Abdulmajeed Abdulla Hasan, known as Haji Samoud, has been ordered to appear in court over his participation in marches earlier during the year.

On 18 July, Bahraini authorities impounded dozens of vehicles participating in a car march as a part of marking Eid al-Ghadir. The owners of the impounded vehicles were summoned for questioning after they participated in the mentioned march and played a religious song. They also had their driver's licenses confiscated.

On 22 July, the administrator of a local maatam in Sanabis region was summoned for questioning for singing a religious song, called Salam ya Mahdi. And on 27 July, the prominent Shiite cleric Sheikh Fadel Al-Zaki was ordered to appear for questioning by authorities without mentioning the reasons.



Aug ust

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Violations on Religious Freedoms to the Light During Ashura

On the annual occasion of Ashura, 27 violations were recorded during August, including removing Ashura banners or flags, observing citizens participating in the events closely, photographing them, and asking them to show their papers sometimes.

Moreover, a group of citizens were prevented from traveling for performing religious rites in Iraq. The ban was issued by the Bahrain International Airport security authorities “within the sectarian persecution series against Shites”.

Moreover, detainees were also prevented from performing their religious rites during Ashura. Authorities deprived detainees of all buildings at Jaw Prison from completing the Ashura commemoration, removed Ashura banners, insulted the detainees’ sect, and broke the pulpit that the detainees made from materials they bought from the canteen.

Detainees protested such violations by refusing meals 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. Further details on the violations of Ashura are found in GIDHR’s joint report “Bahrain: Absence of Religious Tolerance (2).”



Sep tember

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14 Detainees Forcibly Disappeared

In early September, brief calls were received from 2 or 3 detainees of a group of 14 detainees, who disappeared since 10 August. The group names are Ahmad Jassim Al-Qubaiti, Ammar Abd Al-Ghani, Aqil Abd Al-Rasoul, Hasan Ahmad, Hussein Ayyad, Hussein Fadel, Hussain Muhanna, Husain Al-Mumin, Hussain Al-Sheikh, Mohammad Abd Al-Jalil, Mohammad Abd Al-Nabi Al-Khor, Al-Sayyid Mohammad Al-Tublani, Salman Ismail, and Yasser al-Mumin.

In their brief calls, they indicated they were being held in isolation; however, it was clearly noticed that they were uncomfortable. Hussain Muhanna, the son of activist Ali Muhanna, didn't answer his father when asked if he was being tortured. Ammar Abd Al-Ghani told his family, during the brief call, that he was suffering from heart problems after enduring more than 30 days in solitary. Meanwhile, Mohammad Abd Al-Nabi Al-Khor, said he was thrown into solitary as punishment for exposing abuses inside the prison, and then the call was disconnected.

On 5 September, 9 of the political prisoners' families received calls from Jaw Prison administration informing them that they have a visit for their beloved sons. After arriving at the prison, and undergoing intrusive searches, the families were told the visits were canceled.

As families continued their efforts to contact the bodies established by the authorities, including the National Institution for Human Rights and Ministry of Interior, the Ombudsman finally issued a statement, on 6 September, denying any form of forcible disappearance of the 14 political prisoners. A team from the Ombudsman visited the Reformation and Rehabilitation Center in Jaw. "These inmates had committed legal violations on 10 August and had taken the necessary administrative measures at the time," the statement said.

In late September, Hussain Muhanna, one of the aforementioned prisoners, revealed that they were moved from one cell to another and even deprived of basic necessities such as soap. They were transferred to the Criminal Investigation building and threatened to be transferred to the forensic investigation. After returning to prison, they were kept handcuffed for days. They were deprived of performing religious rites (praying) after clocks and television were confiscated, therefore, they were not able to know praying times. He added that they carried banners protesting the denial of contact, visitation, and medical treatment, therefore, some of their belongings were confiscated.

Medical Negligence: Another Tool to Punish Political Prisoners

Early September, the prominent jailed human rights defender AbdulHadi Abdulla Al-Khawaja protested depriving him access to medical treatment. Instead of enabling him access to treatment, the authorities reduced his call times from 25 to 10 minutes.

In addition, on 17 September, Al-Khawaja was cut off during a call with his family, and he was not given any of his demands. Beside access to medical treatment, Al-khawaja calls for bringing the perpetrators of the crime of torture among the administrative staff of Jaw Prison to justice.

On 8 September, the political prisoner Fawzi Ahmad Ibrahim described the process of depriving him medical treatment as a process of killing him. Fawzi, who suffers from a range of health issues, had several times called for his treatment, but nothing changed. He further demanded a meeting with an official from oversight bodies to convey his suffering, but his demand was not addressed.

Detainee Hussain Ebrahim Marzooq was also prevented from turning up for check-ups at the Salmaniya hospital. According to his family, Marzooq is suffering from pain in his joints and back. The prisoner Hasan Ali Rashid complained about the pain he has been suffering for months, which prevents him from sleeping properly. Hasan has previously misdiagnosed and given a wrong medication that exacerbated his skin condition.

In mid-September, the wife of the death row inmate Mohammad Ramadan said that her husband has been suffering from severe pain since 2 months without being referred to a doctor. Ramadan suffers from a severe pain in neck due to a lump that has been getting bigger for months and is causing facial numbness. He has asked authorities in Jaw Prison for help on daily basis, but his requests were ignored.

Sheikh Abdul-Jalil Al-Miqdad Abused

On 28 September, the jailed Shite cleric Sheikh Abdul-Jalil Al-Miqdad was transferred outside the prison to receive treatment, but a policeman told him that the doctor was not present. Therefore, Al-Miqdad asked for his return to the prison.

As he requested to be returned to prison, members of his police escort demanded he sign a statement saying he refused treatment. When Sheikh Al-Miqdad rejected the demand, four of the guards rushed to beat him, but other guards prevented them. However, the cleric was then insulted and verbally abused.

Sheikh Abduljalil Al-Miqdad was then summoned to an investigation by the Bahraini public prosecutor after the officers who led the assault against him filed a complaint. Perhaps, Sheikh Al-Miqdad refused to cooperate with the investigators as they are known for loss of transparency and fairness. The ombudsman then, as usual, turned the victim into perpetrator and dismissed the oversight body's conclusions on the assault of Sheikh Abduljalil Al-Miqdad.

Crackdown on Activists Continues

On the occasion of the annual Arbaeen pilgrimage (a Shitee rites where people visit the shrine of Imam Hussain in Iraq), Bahraini authorities prevented a group of citizens from traveling to Iraq. Shite cleric Sheikh Maytham Al-Salman was prevented from traveling to Iraq and was turned away at the Manama airport under the pretext that he failed to secure "prior permission" from the relevant authorities for his trip.

The president of the Shite Clerical Council Sayed Majeed Al-Mishal also was prevented from traveling to Iraq. Sayed Majeed was informed by authorities that he hadn't 'obtained a license' for the trip.

On the other hand, the UAE security authorities prevented Bahraini journalists Nazeeha Saeed and Wafa Al-Aamm from entering the country on 23 and 26 September respectively. The journalist Nazeeha Saeed was informed, after insisting, that "you will not be allowed to enter for security reasons." While the journalist Wafa Al-Aamm was informed that "it is better to communicate with the authorities in your country."



Oct ober

Peek on Bahrain's Human
Rights Violations in 2022

Pope Francis addressed the human rights violations during his visit to Bahrain

Pope Francis, the first pontiff to visit Bahrain, visited Bahrain in early November. Pope Francis addressed some of the grave violations committed in the country citing the country's own constitution, which forbids discrimination based on sex, origin, language, religion, or creed.

Such commitments, said the pope, "need constantly to be put into practice, so that religious freedom will be complete and not limited to freedom of worship; that equal dignity and equal opportunities will be concretely recognized for each group and for every individual; that no forms of discrimination exist and that fundamental human rights are not violated but promoted."

In particular, the pope singled out the country's recent reliance on the death penalty. Bahrain's de-facto moratorium on capital punishment ended in 2017. Since then, six people have been executed.

"I think in the first place of the right to life, of the need to guarantee that right always, including for those being punished, whose lives should not be taken," Francis said.

Francis, also, said that Bahrain's work of deepening its commitment to human rights must be kept in focus. "Authentic, humane and integral development is measured above all," said the pope, by concern shown towards those on the margins, especially migrants and prisoners.

Political Prisoners in Jaw face ill-treatment & the perpetrators face no accountability

Sheikh Abduljalil Al-Miqdad confirmed that he's being deprived of medical treatment. Sheikh Abduljalil suffers from severe headache, dizziness, feet swelling, eye problems, and backache. The political prisoner Mahmoud Naji Ali said he suffers from severe stomach pains and chronic headaches, while authorities ignore his demand to see a specialist. The political prisoner Mohammad Hassan Al-Raml also confirmed that he is being denied access to prescribed medication and proper medical care.

The political prisoner Mohammad Ramadan was beaten by guards at Jaw Prison, after he previously mentioned his suffering with medical negligence. Amnesty commented on the assault saying "No accountability then leads to no accountability now. How long is this cycle going to go on at Jau prison?"

Detainee Faisal Al-Alawi was diagnosed with cancer in June, yet he was denied medication, and his check-ups at Al-Salmaniya hospital were canceled.

The detainee Ali Makki Ali Salman suffers from a large lump on his forehead, blurry vision, chronic headaches, and dizziness. Authorities are still denying him access to medical treatment although his symptoms are very similar to those which Sayed Kazem Abbas Al-Sahlawi had. Sayed kazem is an ex-detainee who suffered from brain cancer, due to denial of medical treatment, he lost his life.

Detainees during October faced restrictions on religious freedom too. On 13 October, more than 80 detainees in Jaw Prison refused breakfast as a protest over restrictions on performing religious rites. Therefore, the authorities prevented them from going to the prison courtyard.

Moreover, prison cells were raided, and detainees' belongings confiscated or destroyed. While a group of detainees opposed the act, they were transferred to an unknown location.

Bahrain to withdraw its candidacy for a UN human rights body

In early October, a UN site revealed that Bahrain withdrew its candidacy on 26 September to run for a three-year seat at the Geneva-based body, without giving details. Bahrain's decision came after NGOs drew attention to allegations of arbitrary detention as well as reprisals against individuals.

Days after announcing the decision, Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented the issuance of death sentences after torture and sham trials in the kingdom. Bahraini courts have convicted and sentenced defendants to death following manifestly unfair trials, based solely or primarily on confessions allegedly coerced through torture and ill-treatment, HRW said.



November

Peek on Bahrain's Human
Rights Violations in 2022

Elections

Parliamentary elections were held in Bahrain on 12 November 2022 in an atmosphere of political repression. Ibrahim Serhan, legal counselor and member of Salam for Democracy and Human Rights, during the human rights conference “Bahrain: Elections without Integrity”, revealed that nearly 94,000 names were deleted from the voters’ list, which represents more than 27% of the voting bloc.

GIDHR’s chairman, Yahya Alhadid, said that “the Bahraini government in 2018 implemented the political isolation law which deprived more than 100,000 Bahraini citizens of their political rights, their rights to candidacy, and their right to civil work.”

The head of Salam for Democracy and Human Rights, Former MP Jawad Fairouz, confirmed that the elections took place as “the right of the legislative authority to introduce legislation and conduct oversight has been completely taken away.”

The head of Bahrain Forum for Human Rights, Baqer Darwish, stated that the nominal parliament, which has no powers, is one of the manifestations of the constitutional crisis exploited by the authority, contrary to the popular will and international conventions.

Moreover, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Amna Guellali said: "In Bahrain today, there is no genuine, political opposition and no independent media, while critical human rights organizations are unable to operate freely inside the country. Holding this general election will not address the atmosphere of repression and the denial of human rights that has gripped Bahrain for years."

Furthermore, the United Kingdom MP Alistair Carmichael called on his government not to recognize the outcome of Bahrain's parliamentary elections and to urge the kingdom to release all opposition figures, including the leader of Al Wefaq, Sheikh Ali Salman.

Bahrain's Universal Periodic Review 41

On 7 November, Bahrain's Universal Periodic Review session was held. During the session, nearly 30 countries called on Bahrain to restore a moratorium on the death penalty and consider pardoning all those on death row and suspending and commuting their sentences.

Moreover, several recommendations regarding human rights were made, including respecting the religious freedoms of Shiites, release political detainees, remove restrictions on peaceful assembly and association...

Furthermore, a group of countries insisted on the importance of amending the 1963 Citizenship Law, by allowing the passage of citizenship from women to her child, while introducing legislation

to protect and guarantee the rights of stateless children.

On the other hand, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination pointed to Bahrain's discriminatory policies against Shiite citizens. The Committee said that the kingdom's National Human Rights Institute lacks independence.

Violations Against Detainees Never End

On 15 November, Sheikh Abdulhadi Al-Mukhodher announced starting a hunger strike as a protest to ill-treatment manifested by verbal abuses. As the news spread in the prison, detainees showed solidarity with the cleric by refusing to return to their cells, demanding an apology for Sheikh Al-Mukhodher. The authorities responded to the strike, by confining detainees to their cells all day, denying them access to calls, and going to the prison's yard.

In addition, the political prisoner Mohammad Al-Iskafi wasn't granted a furlough to attend his mother's funeral. His mother died on 22 November, and the family urged authorities to grant him a furlough to attend the funeral.

In late November, detainees at Jaw Prison confirmed the spread of an infectious virus that causes Covid-like symptoms. However, the prison's administration refused to test the detainees for Covid, to detect the type of the virus.

Moreover, as authorities continue to ignore the conditions of the jailed opposition leader Hasan Mushaima, his family organized a sit-in on 18 November outside the Kanoo Medical Center demanding immediate medical treatment for Mr. Hassan. Several family members were detained briefly multiple times in an attempt to stop their activism. However, they insisted on their legal right to organize the sit-in, which continued for 10 days.

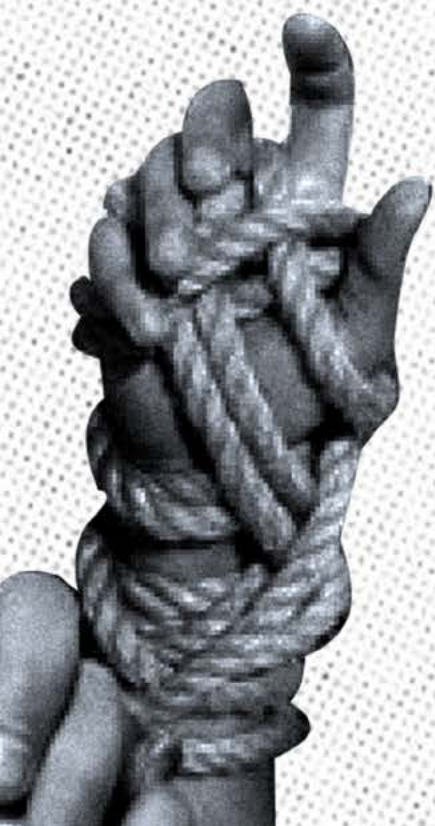
Abdul Hadi AlKhawaja

On 6 November, the jailed human rights defender Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja informed his family of a new series of criminal charges brought against him. He stated that he is facing three legal cases and expects a fourth one. Al-Khawaja further told his family that each of the charges is linked to his protests over conditions in Jaw Prison.

The first hearing was scheduled on 16 November in Bahrain's Second Lower Criminal Court, but it was postponed until 28 November, on the grounds that Al-Khawaja needed to do a power of attorney which he was going to do in-person while attending the hearing.

On 28 November, Al-Khawaja did not have access to attend his trials in person or grant power of attorney to his lawyer, despite the court order made to the Ministry of Interior to follow the procedure of granting his lawyer with power of attorney.

In a blatant breach to his right to a fair trial, and in what was a clear due process violation, the judge proceeded with convicting Al-Khawaja on two charges. In the first case, he was convicted of insulting a public servant, in reference to a police officer at Jaw Prison, where the sentence upheld against him is to pay a fine of 100 Bahraini Dinar. In the second case, he was convicted and fined 60 Bahraini Dinar (BHD) on the charge of breaking a plastic chair.



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