



GULF INSTITUTE  
for Democracy and Human Rights

## UPDATES ON THE CRACKDOWN ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GULF

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## Policeman to a Detainee "Let Him Die"





## POLICEMAN TO A DETAINEE "LET HIM DIE"

Prisoners of conscience are still suffering from cruel and inhuman treatment, including medical negligence, however, it sometimes crosses the red lines. On 24 April, one of the detainees housed at Jaw Prison experienced convulsions. His inmates called for help, however, one of the security forces refused to transfer him to receive medical treatment and answered the request with “LET HIM DIE”!! After the inmates continued knocking the doors, the officer was forced to meet their demand by transferring the political prisoner Zuhair to receive medical treatment.

Another case of medical negligence refers to the political prisoner Mohammad Al-Raml, who confirmed that Jaw Prison administration has been preventing him for 3 years from visiting doctors despite his critical health condition.

Mohammad has been denied access to visit a doctor and to undergo an MRI for his body. Therefore, he started a hunger strike in late March, however, authorities did not respond to his demand.

Moreover, on 4 April, Al-Raml said he wasn't taken to hospital for a scheduled surgery without any further explanation. AL-Raml is still on hunger strike although his health has deteriorated. On 29 April, he was transferred to an unknown location.

Another form of ill-treatment that detainees housed at Jaw Prison was being denied access to the prison courtyard. In late April, a number of detainees were caught sharing their food with pigeons. As a result, they were punished by losing access to the courtyard.



## DETAINED OPPOSITION LEADERS ARE STILL TARGETED

Bahraini authorities had targeted the most prominent opposition leaders and arrested them over their roles in the protests that took place during 2011. Authorities' harassment continued to pursue the leaders behind bars.

The most used form of harassment is medical negligence. In late March, the activist Ali Mushaima confirmed that his father, Hasan Mushaima, is being denied access to medication for relieving nerve pain. The activist added that the authorities refused to accept the medicine the family bought.

On 5 April, the jailed Shiite cleric Sheikh Abduljalil Al-Miqdad, had been deprived of access to his scheduled medical appointment at the hospital. Therefore, Sheikh AL-Miqdad staged a protest in the prison courtyard holding a banner demanding access to medical treatment.

On 6 April, the activist Maryam AL-Khawaja revealed that her jailed father is still being denied access to necessary medical care. She also explained that Bahraini authorities are lying when claiming that her father, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, is refusing to be transferred to his medical appointments at the hospital.

Moreover, the jailed opposition leader Abdulwahab Hussein is also denied medical treatment. Prior to his arrest, Abdulwahab had multiple health concerns and conditions including diabetes, nerve damage, sickle cell disease, disc in his spine and neck, blood pressure issues... Lately, he is suffering from old age pain and needs a crutch to help him walk, however, he is being deprived of having it.

On 24 April, the detained opposition leader Sheikh Mirza Al-Mahroos revealed that he has been suffering for a month from back pains. Sheikh Al-Mahroos explained that upon his transfer to the hospital, he was injured due to the cruel conditions inside the so-called Turkish armored vehicle. Political prisoners have repeatedly complained about the aforementioned vehicle, which has cramped seats and no windows or ventilation.



## GATHERINGS AROUND GRAVES ARE LABELLED AS "ILLEGAL GATHERINGS"

In early April, a number of activists and some relatives of citizens who were killed by Bahraini security forces, were summoned for investigation over their gathering at the graves of their beloved ones. Among the summoned were the activist Ali Muhanna who has been interrogated multiple times over his protests calling for the release of his son. Muhanna explained that it was the first time to label such activities as “illegal gatherings”. Munir Mushaima, the brother of Sami who was executed in 2017, was also among the summoned, as well as Abdulhadi Mushaima, whose son Ali was killed by security forces in 2011.

Meanwhile, on 13 April, a group of citizens were threatened to be arrested over using loudspeakers during religious gatherings. The locals in the Diraz region were ordered to a police station, where they were given the choice between handing loudspeakers or facing potential criminal charges.

During April, dozens of citizens were arrested over political cases. One case refers to the Shiite cleric Sheikh Ali Awainti who was arrested upon his arrival to the kingdom on 10 April. Another was the arrest of an elderly man, named Ali Nasser, who was arrested after storming his house in Sitra. And on 12 April, the Islamic eulogist and singer Abdul Amir Al-Biladi was arrested. Al-Biladi’s arrest was over a poem he recited condemning the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Although there is no legal basis criminalizing solidarity with the Palestinian case, Al-Biladi was kept behind bars till 27 April.



## MOHAMMAD AL-QAHTANI'S FORCED DISAPPEARANCE CONTINUE

As 24 April marks six months since prominent Saudi human rights defender Mohammad Al-Qahtani last contacted his family, numerous calls for his release were recorded.

Al-Qahtani was arbitrarily arrested in March 2012 over his peaceful activism, to be sentenced to 10 years in prison and a travel ban of equal length during March 2013. The verdict was issued on fabricated charges including breaking allegiance to the ruler, questioning the integrity of officials, seeking to disrupt security and inciting disorder by calling for demonstrations.

As his sentence ended on 22 November 2022, the Saudi authorities kept him in incommunicado detention and denied him any contact with his family. Since then, no one was able to know his whereabouts.

On 24 April, a group of human rights organizations, including Amnesty and AIQst, called for the immediate and unconditional release of Mohammad Al-Qahtani, in addition to disclose his fate and whereabouts, ensure immediate contact with his family, and provide him with any medical care he may need.

## FOR THE FIRST TIME, EXECUTION HELD IN RAMADAN

In late March, the Saudi authorities executed a man, to be the first execution case taking place in the kingdom during the holy month of Ramdan, since 2009, according to the European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights.

It was the 17th case of execution recorded in the kingdom during 2023, noting that all 17 executions took place during March. Therefore, fears arise for threatened detainees, especially minors. At least 9 detainees are at imminent risk of execution over charges that took place while they were minors. They are: Abdullah Al-Huweiti, Abdullah Al-Darzai, Ali Hassan Al-Subaiti, Ali Jaafar Al Mabiouq, Hasan Zaki Al-Faraj, Jalal Al-Labad, Jawad Qureiris, and Yousef Al-Manasef.



## MULTIPLE CALLS TO END THE USE OF DEATH SENTENCES

Several countries drew attention to Saudi Arabia's human rights record during the 52 session of the United Nations Human Rights Council held in Geneva. Ending the use of death penalties was the most frequent call. Denmark condemned the continued use of the death penalty and torture. Switzerland expressed concern at Saudi Arabia's lifting of a short-lived moratorium on use of the death penalty for drug-related offenses, and called on the authorities to reinstate the moratorium and limit use of the death penalty to only the most serious of crimes, in conformity with international law. Norway called on Saudi Arabia to fulfill its citizens' rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Moreover, a group of UK MPs addressed their government to walk away from trade negotiations with Gulf states. SNP MP Angus Brendan MacNeil explained that human rights value should be more considerable than economic opportunities. "A trade deal with the GCC, like any major free trade agreement, of course represents a potential economic opportunity for the UK. But this particular deal is about something even more important. The approach we take here will be about how we see ourselves as a society, how we are seen around the world and whether we are willing to put our values on human rights and the environment on the negotiating table," he said.

From its side, Human Rights Watch called on Microsoft to suspend a possible investment by the tech giant in Saudi Arabia to build a new data centre inside the kingdom until Riyadh can clearly demonstrate how it will mitigate the risk of facilitating serious human rights violations.

"Saudi authorities have grievously violated their own citizens' right to privacy by hacking phones, infiltrating major tech companies, and passing laws granting sweeping surveillance powers to government entities," said Arvind Ganesan, economic justice and human rights director at HRW. "Microsoft should not shut its eyes to Saudi Arabia's abuses and should halt its investment until the company can meaningfully explain how it will mitigate human rights risks."



## RELEASED PRISONERS HIGHLIGHTED TORTURE THEY FACED

The parties of conflict in Yemen had agreed to release hundreds in a prisoner exchange process. This step, which is considered as a crucial step, ended up the suffering of many separated families.

However, it also revealed the suffering prisoners at Saudi prisons were subjected to. AlJazeera website had released an article that shed the light on prisoners suffering in Saudi prisons. It explained that prisoners were subjected to torture, ill-treatment, bad nutrition, denying of medical treatment...

“Torture in prison included solitary confinement, humiliation, deprivation, beating with cables and clubs, and being electrocuted,” Majed Albazili, one of the released prisoners said.

Moreover, the former prisoner Gamal Buhaibeh indicated that their meals were made of small portions. “The nutrition in prison was horrible. For breakfast and dinner, they used to give us lentils. The lunch was a small amount of cooked vegetables and rice. That was our food for years. We received meat twice a year, during Eid al-Adha and [Prophet Muhammad’s] birthday,” he said.

“Being deprived of adequate exposure to the sun intensified the suffering of prisoners. Because of that, our immunity weakened. Skin-related diseases, anemia, and tuberculosis began spreading,” Buhaibeh added.

## FORCED EVICTIONS IN ADEN

Dozens in the Bir Ahmed area, west of Aden, had indicated that they were forcibly displaced. In late April, dozens of families in the aforementioned area, explained that a number of armed forces, without prior warning, forced them to evacuate their houses.

The evacuation process was on the pretext that the land would be a site for the solar power plant project. Sheikh Rashad Awad Bessi, one of the displaced citizens said, “The demolition of homes is an injustice that no one accepts.”