

# ISSUE #40 – FEB 2024

## Highlights on the Crackdown on the Human Rights in the Gulf

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## **Prisoner Medical Negligence Is a Systematic Slow Killing**

Not only does medical negligence violate human rights and medical ethics, but it also functions as a political tool of punishment in Bahraini detention facilities. Throughout the past years, numerous political prisoners have been punished by not being allowed to see a doctor or get prescribed medication.

Early in the month of February, the health of the prisoner of conscience, Mohammad Abdul Amir, had deteriorated after being deprived of access to medication. He has multiple medical conditions, most notably irritable bowel syndrome, and he frequently has spasms during the day that send him tumbling to the ground. His family made it clear that the Jaw Prison's administration disregarded their son's medical care and did not give him the prescribed medication.

The medical malpractice that the prisoner of conscience Hamad Yousif Kadhem suffered caused his health to worsen on February 5. Kadhem has gout, a disease that causes acute, excruciating episodes of joint pain, but the administration has refused to let him see a specialist.

Following surgery, the political prisoner Mohammad Hassan Al-Ramel developed serious infections in his legs, according to his family. The family clarified that following his hernia surgery, Mohammad was referred

to a physician at the Military Hospital, who found infections. Although the doctor had prescribed three medications, the prison administration informed him that the other two had "disappeared" and only gave him one.

The collective punishment of a number of political prisoners on February 11 was another instance of mistreatment that was observed in February. Following a verbal altercation between a guard and one of the prisoners, a number of detainees were placed in isolation and denied access to the outside world.

## **More Arrests Violates Freedom of Opinion**

A spate of arrests and summonses has occurred in February; the majority of these have occurred around the 13th anniversary of the 14 February 2011 pro-democracy protests. The Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights monitored the arrest of 18 citizens, including 4 minors; some were then released, while others were kept in custody pending investigations.

Niku Jafarnia, a researcher in the Middle East and Africa division at Human Rights Watch, said that: "Bahrain continues to arrest children, and at least 29 children remain in detention, because of their participation in pro-Palestine activism since October 7. Many have been denied family visits."

One of those minors who was arbitrarily kept in custody is Kassem Al-Samie. He was arrested on 14 January 2024, while he was trying to travel with his mother. Since then, Kassem's detention has been renewed four times.

Kassem's mother said in a message addressed to the authorities: "I was hopeful that my son would be freed since I was certain of his innocence, but I was struck hard by the news of his detention renewal for two weeks, due to the distressing tone I heard from a child whose only crime is being from the Al-Samie family."

Moreover, she added that: “there is deliberate monitoring by the Ministry of Interior of our children, as admitted by the officer who told my son: As I brought your siblings for interrogation, I've brought you as well.” Kassem’s older brother Abbas al-Samie was one of three torture victims executed on trumped-up charges during 2017.

Another case refers to Sayed Hashem Ni'amah Al-Wadaei, 20 years old. Sayed Hashem is the son of the former detainee Hajar Mansoor. He was arrested on 22 February during a pre-dawn raid on the family home. During the raid, the security forces refused to present an official warrant, however, they confiscated some of his belongings, including electronic devices and money.



## **Saudi Dissident Fears Deportation From Bulgaria**

Abdulrahman al-Khalidi, a Saudi citizen who has been detained in Bulgaria since 25 October 2021, fears forcible deportation to Saudi Arabia. Al-Khalidi who is a known dissident and political activist, fled from the kingdom after being threatened over his activism.

He reached Bulgaria, where he sought asylum; however, unfortunately, his asylum request was denied by the Bulgarian Refugee Agency, and he was then detained. Currently, he is facing the risk of deportation to Saudi Arabia, as the state security agency handed him a deportation order on 7 February. Abdulrahman said: “If I’m deported to Saudi Arabia, I’d face prison, unfair trial, torture, forcible disappearance, or even execution.”

Saudi Arabia has experienced a harsh crackdown on dissent under the rule of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, leading to the deportation of several opponents. Hasan Al-Rabia is an example; he was forcibly deported last year from Morocco to KSA, over a politically motivated case.



## **Seven were Executed in a Single Case**

On 27 February, Saudi authorities executed 7 men on terrorism charges, accusing them of betraying "their homeland, threatening its stability, and endangering its security," as the Saudi Press Agency announced. It was the highest number of executions in a single case since March 2022, when the authorities executed 81 people in a single day.

This case brought the total number of those who were put to death on terrorism charges to 11 out of 36 death sentences carried out by the kingdom during January and February 2024.

The 7 men were arrested between December 2019 and January 2022 and executed in the capital, Riyadh, after the death sentence was upheld by the Specialized Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court, said the ministry of interior. However, none of the human rights organizations were able to monitor their cases prior to their execution. Therefore, it is more likely that they were tried, convicted, and sentenced in complete secrecy.

Last year, the Kingdom executed 172, 32 of them were accused of terrorism charges. Most of those 32 cases treated under terrorism law, were politically motivated. Saudi Arabia is one of the world's most prolific users of capital punishment.



## **Civilian Casualties due to American Airstrikes**

Even though the coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has stopped airstrikes on Yemen, residual explosives continue to target civilians. On 17 February, a citizen was killed by explosive remnants in the Shuwarq area of Razih directorate. Since the start of the war against Yemen, the number of civilian casualties from cluster bombs has surpassed 25,000. Residents are still at risk from landmines and their remnants, especially in agricultural areas and near roads.

Moreover, the Ministry of Public Health and Population confirmed the death of a citizen and the injuries of 8 others on 26 February due to an airstrike by an American drone. It went on to say that the airstrikes in Taiz province's Maqbana district killed one citizen and injured six more, while the strikes in the Nahda neighborhood of Thawra district in the capital city of Sana injured two more.

The airstrikes violated international law by targeting civilian objects and killing civilians who ought to be protected during wars. Furthermore, the attack intentionally targeted Sana's densely populated civilian areas, seriously damaging civilians' homes and property.