

## One Year Later, Implementation of BICI Recommendations Remains Stagnant

One year after the [Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry](#) (BICI) issued a series of recommendations on human rights and accountability reforms, ADHRB is disappointed to note that very little progress has actually been made to improve the human rights situation in Bahrain. In its [report card](#) issued last week on the status of implementation of the BICI recommendations, ADHRB found that only one of the key recommendations had been fully implemented. The 25 remaining recommendations have been partially or inadequately implemented, as further explained in ADHRB's implementation status [report](#).

The BICI was established by the king of Bahrain in June 2011 to address concerns resulting from the government's violent crackdown on last year's pro-democracy protests. Although Bahrain received due credit for establishing the BICI, its lack of resolve in implementing the reforms recommended by the commission has been a major source of frustration and disappointment.

"The implementation of the BICI was, by all accounts, supposed to improve the human rights situation in Bahrain, but what we've actually seen is a deterioration of human rights in Bahrain over the past several months," said ADHRB Director Husain Abdulla. "The Government of Bahrain only seems intent on punishing human rights defenders, rather than abusers. In recent months, we've seen an uptick in the number of human rights defenders who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained. Meanwhile, only low-ranking officers have been investigated for human rights abuses in connection with last year's protests, and certainly no high-ranking officers have been held to account."

The implementation of the recommendations has been [regarded](#) by Cherif Bassiouni, the former chairman of the BICI, as 'inadequate.' Mr. Bassiouni concluded that '[a] number of recommendations on accountability were either not implemented or implemented only half-heartedly.' Mr. Bassiouni cited multiple instances where the Government of Bahrain had failed to uphold its human rights obligations under international law, including the admission of forced confessions as evidence in court cases; the ongoing persecution of individuals for exercising their free speech rights; and failure to hold officials accountable for the torture or death of detainees.

"Appointing the BICI and accepting its report wasn't enough," said Abdulla. "The government had to demonstrate that it could address the problems exposed by the commission. It had the perfect opportunity to show that it could be taken seriously. Unfortunately, it missed the opportunity."

Earlier this month, the Government of Bahrain revoked the citizenship of 31 Bahrainis, leaving those without dual citizenship—presumed to be the majority of the group—stateless. In addition, police forces continue to use excessive force against protesters, and reports of arbitrary arrests of innocent bystanders—including children—continue to be made.