



Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain

1001 Connecticut St. NW, Suite 205 • Washington, DC 200036 • 202-621-6141 • www.adhrb.org • @ADHRB

ADHRB Urges Reconsideration of Recommendations Made by Bahrain's National Assembly

WASHINGTON, DC – July 29, 2013 – On Sunday, the Bahrain National Assembly held an extraordinary session reportedly in response to an increase in violence in Bahrain, but also amid [growing support](#) for Bahrain's Tamarod Movement protests, set to take place on August 14. Following the extraordinary session, the National Assembly [released](#) 22 recommendations, which the King of Bahrain readily [accepted](#). Disconcertingly, however, the recommendations lack regard for basic human rights protections, including freedoms of expression, assembly, association, and speech. Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain is deeply concerned by these recommendations made by the National Assembly and urges the Government of Bahrain to reconsider all proposals which infringe upon the people of Bahrain's fundamental human rights.

The recommendations encourage "tough" and "severe" legal penalties for a variety of vaguely worded activities which the government deems as inciting violence or undermining security. If implemented, as the King of Bahrain has said should happen as soon as possible, these proposals would allow the Government of Bahrain to target a broad swath of Bahraini activists and oppositionists, simply for exercising their legitimate rights to freedom of assembly and expression, including anyone who uses social media "in an illegal way" or who disseminates "false information." Disturbingly, the recommendations also ban protest gatherings and call for revoking the citizenship of those who carry out or instigate undefined "terrorist crimes." The Bahrain government frequently abuses their ambiguous definition of "terrorism" and related national security crimes in order to justify the arbitrary arrest, detention, and sentencing of [bloggers](#), [medical professionals](#), and [prominent human rights activists](#).

"For decades, the Bahrain ruling family and their allies within the National Assembly have forcefully sought ways to silence criticism and dissent, and these recommendations are another example of the extreme measures the ruling family is willing to undertake to retain a stronghold on power," ADHRB Director Husain Abdulla said. "Many of the recommendations presented by parliament are nothing short of institutionalized human rights violations masquerading as security measures. The only way forward in Bahrain is through substantive dialogue and reform, an end to violence by all parties, an immediate stop to rights abuses, and accountability for those responsible for serious human rights violations, including senior government officials."

With the onset of Bahrain's peaceful protest movement in 2011, the Bahrain government enforced a swift and brutal crackdown that led to thousands of arrests and injuries, hundreds of reported cases of torture, and dozens of deaths. To [undertake](#) this severe crackdown, GCC forces led by Saudi Arabia assisted the Government of Bahrain, which had declared a state of emergency. Following the subsequent human rights violations perpetrated against protesters by government forces during the crackdown, the King of Bahrain accepted recommendations made by the [Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry \(BICI\)](#) – a body commissioned to investigate abuses and propose reforms. However, few of the recommendations have been implemented fully or in good faith.

"The majority of the proposals made by the National Assembly directly contradict those made by the BICI report nearly two years ago, calling into even greater question the sincerity of the government's promise to implement the BICI reforms," Abdulla said. "If the Bahrain government is serious about enacting reform and increasing stability, it must participate in a meaningful dialogue with all segments of society to address their legitimate grievances, implement all recommendations made by the BICI report, and allow all parties to peacefully exercise their internationally recognized rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association."

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