



NIHR Report Fails to Address Root Causes of Human Rights Violations

8 December 2015 – The Bahrain National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR) issued its [second annual report](#) on 3 December 2015 regarding promotion and protection of human rights in Bahrain throughout 2014. While the report addresses some areas of concern, a majority of the report did not address key systematic issues of human rights abuses in the kingdom. [ADHRB](#), [BCHR](#), and [BIRD](#) are concerned that the NIHR's second annual report does not comprehensively reflect developments throughout 2014, and instead dilutes Bahrain's national human rights discourse and fails to universally fulfil its mandate.

The Government of Bahrain established the NIHR in 2009 to be an independent body tasked with monitoring human rights conditions in the country. However, the king continues to appoint the institution's 11 members, many of whom maintain direct ties to the government. Complaints to the NIHR fell by 25 percent since 2013, evidencing not a more stable human rights situation, but a lack of public confidence in the institution to effectively discharge its duties. Further, the second annual report document's the institution's inability to implement last year's recommendations, a failure it characterizes as having resulted from a recent election and a new cabinet. As a result of compromised impartiality, the institution remains unable to fulfil its mandate of directly and positively impacting the human rights situation on the ground.

“Despite some substantive criticism and recommendations in the NIHR's 2013 report, the government has not taken any steps toward improving the human rights situation here,” said Nabeel Rajab, President of BCHR. “For its human rights bodies and mechanisms to be credible and effective, the government must be committed to implementing positive changes to combat systematic abuse.”

Fully half of the second annual report is dedicated to the legal provisions of the NIHR, and much of the remainder documents its activities to promote and protect human rights in Bahrain. However, the report fails to address cases of torture, unfairness of election and politically motivated human rights violations, though numerous international organizations continue to document the [systematic use of torture](#) and [criminalization of free speech](#) in Bahrain. The report additionally lacks any details concerning incidents, violating parties, how it addressed these violations, or how it resolved the 36 complaints it claims were resolved.

ADHRB has submitted approximately 40 complaints to the NIHR since 2014. Despite repeated follow up over the last two years, the NIHR has only acknowledged one of

ADHRB's complaints. While the NIHR's report addresses Bahrain's legislative and legal mechanisms that purportedly prevent human rights abuses, such as human trafficking, the right to self-determination, and protection against enforced disappearance, it does not cite examples of any of the numerous human rights abuses that continue in the country. Instead, the report reiterates the NIHR's calls for the concerned authorities to uphold Bahrain's human rights obligations.

"Bahrain needs more than rhetoric to solve the gross human rights violations that continue with impunity," said Husain Abdulla, Executive Director of ADHRB. "The NIHR's second report lacks any in-depth investigation into the violations that we and other human rights organizations continue to report."

The NIHR's Annual Report is only the most recent example of the institution's misleading public comments regarding the country's human rights record. Following the [release](#) of Human Rights Watch's (HRW) November 2015 report on torture in Bahrain, the NIHR [mischaracterized](#) HRW's recommendation for conditional UN technical assistance programming with Bahrain. In October, the NIHR [attempted to reframe](#) the narrative of the dire human rights situation expressed by 35 states in a [joint statement](#) at the September session of the UN Human Rights Council.

"The NIHR continues to try to white wash the systematic human rights abuses in Bahrain," said Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Director of Advocacy at BIRD. "Unless the NIHR becomes fully independent and stops being a mouthpiece for the government, Bahraini citizens will continue to suffer the consequences."