



Collective Efforts

INTERNATIONAL CALLS
FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND
REFORM IN BAHRAIN



Americans for Democracy
& Human Rights in Bahrain

BIRD
BAHRAIN INSTITUTE FOR
RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY



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Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) fosters awareness of, and
support for, democracy and human rights in Bahrain and the Middle East.

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization,
registered with the Bahraini Ministry of Labor and Social Services since July 2002. Despite an
order by the authorities in November 2004 to close, the BCHR is still functioning after gaining
wide local and international support for its struggles to promote human rights in Bahrain.

The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) is a London, UK-based non-profit
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Introduction

In 2011, the Government of Bahrain violently suppressed the country's peaceful pro-democracy movement. More than half of the population protested structural inequalities, corruption, repression, and a lack of democratic political representation. In response to the protest movement, the Bahraini government dispatched security forces to quell the demonstrations, leading to thousands of arrests, hundreds of injuries, and dozens of deaths. From athletes to lawyers, and students to nurses, the government targeted anyone who raised a dissenting voice with media attacks, home raids, arbitrary detention, judicial harassment, torture, and even extrajudicial killing.

Over the last five years, the government has only intensified its control of civil society by interrogating, arresting, and imprisoning hundreds of human rights defenders, journalists, political opposition leaders, and religious figures. In just the first eight months of 2016, Bahraini authorities have targeted prominent activists like Nabeel Rajab and Sheikh Maytham al-Salman and initiated an unprecedented campaign to restrict the rights of the country's Shia religious leadership. In response to the increased suppression of religious freedom, in particular, five UN Special Procedures recently released a joint statement urging Bahrain to end its "persecution of Shias," who continue to be "targeted on the basis of their religion."¹

It is against this backdrop that the international community has issued numerous statements expressing concern for ongoing human rights violations Bahrain and calling for reform. In this report, *Collective Efforts: International Calls for Reform and Accountability in Bahrain*, Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), and the Bahrain Institute for Right & Democracy (BIRD) analyze all the statements and resolutions of the member states of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), the European Parliament (EP), the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), and the UN Secretary-General since 2011 in order to track the international reaction to the deterioration of Bahrain's human rights situation.

Specifically, this report examines the five joint statements on Bahrain issued by the UN Human Rights Council, the eight resolutions on Bahrain passed by the European Parliament, and all statements and press releases issued by the UN Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the UN Special Procedures since 2011. ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD have found that despite numerous calls from these widely respected institutions and leaders, the Government of Bahrain has largely continued to violate basic human rights including those to free expression, assembly, and association. In 2016 alone, the authorities have: arrested and forcibly exiled activist Zainab al-Khawaja; rearrested human rights defender and BCHR president Nabeel Rajab; dissolved the largest political opposition group, Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society; extended the sentence of Al-Wefaq's secretary-general, Sheikh Ali Salman; issued multiple travel bans against human rights defenders and activists; and, denaturalized Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim, who is widely regarded as the spiritual leader of Bahrain's Shia community. As one Bahraini activist recently described these developments to ADHRB, "[in the] last few weeks, civil society came under direct and open assaults by authorities and the government became bolder than ever in targeting religious leaders, human rights defenders and civil society organizations that expose corruption, highlight human rights violations, and demand democratic reforms."²

1 "UN rights experts urge Bahrain to end the persecution of Shias," UN Office of the High Commissioner, 16 August 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20375&LangID=E>

2 "#BahrainSpeaks: Voices from the Ground, part 1," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 1 August 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/08/bahrainspeaks-voices-ground/>

By providing a brief overview of the international community's past engagement on Bahrain, this report also provides a clear picture of what new action the international community must take to improve the country's human rights situation. Though the statements and resolutions described here represent significant international efforts to drive positive change in Bahrain, ADHRB, BIRD, and BCHR find that the current approach is no longer appropriate for the scale of ongoing human rights violations. To effectively pressure the government to reconsider its intensified assault on civil society and the public freedoms, it is time for the HRC to issue a resolution on Bahrain. A resolution will best reflect the increasing seriousness of the situation and send a clear message to the Government of Bahrain that the international community will not tolerate the continued violation of basic human rights.

PART 1

Joint Statements at the United Nations Human Rights Council

The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) has passed five joint statements since the pro-democracy movement began in Bahrain in 2011. The joint statements have addressed numerous issues including political prisoners, the imprisonment of human rights defenders, accountability, Bahrain's engagement with UN bodies, denaturalization, and the systematic crackdown on free speech and expression in the kingdom. The following section will provide an overview of the thematic issues covered in the past HRC joint statements and offer updates on how the issues of concern presently stand.

Joint Statement 1: *Date: 28 June 2012*

Number of Signatories: 28

Signatories: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Switzerland.

Joint Statement 2: *Date: 28 February 2013*

Number of Signatories: 44

Signatories: Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Uruguay.

Joint Statement 3: *Date: 9 September 2013*

Number of Signatories: 47

Signatories: Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Uruguay.

Joint Statement 4:

Date: 12 June 2014

Number of Signatories: 47

Signatories: Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Uruguay.

Joint Statement 5:

Date: 14 September 2015

Number of Signatories: 35

Signatories: Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and Uruguay.

Summary of Issues Raised in Joint Statements

I. Release of Political Prisoners and Human Rights Defenders

As Joint Statement 1 was the first to be issued in the aftermath of the 2011 unrest, its signatories called for the Government of Bahrain to release political prisoners it arrested during the pro-democracy protests as well as all incarcerated human rights defenders. During the demonstrations in 2011, Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, the Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy (BIRD) and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) found that Bahraini officials arrested over 4,500 individuals who had engaged in peaceful political protest.³ On 24 December 2011, the Attorney General of Bahrain announced the release of 344 individuals detained in relation to their involvement in the protests. This number represents only eight percent of the approximately 4,500 total prisoners, however, and does not represent a significant government effort to rectify the situation. Current estimates hold that over 3,000 Bahraini political prisoners remain incarcerated.⁴ Since the releases following the 2011 protests, the Bahraini government's exoneration of political prisoners has been piecemeal. Often, it has only released political prisoners

³ *Shattering the Facade: a report on Bahrain's implementation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) recommendations four years on* (Washington, D.C.: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2015)

⁴ *Ibid.*

after they have completed their full sentences, such as in the second case against activist and leader of the Wa'ad political society Ebrahim Sharif.⁵ After Sharif served a one-year term on charges related to the contents of a speech, the prosecution has since appealed the original decision in an attempt to secure a longer prison sentence, an increasingly common practice in Bahrain.⁶ Sharif is currently at risk of re-arrest. Those that remain imprisoned include other high-profile figures, such as human rights defender and BCHR cofounder Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, who is serving a life sentence.

The authorities also recently rearrested BCHR president Nabeel Rajab on 13 June 2016 for tweets he posted calling attention to torture in Bahrain and the war in Yemen. On 13 June 2016, Bahraini authorities arrested Nabeel Rajab in connection to his social media posts criticizing the government.⁷ His initial detention was supposed to last seven days, however officials extended it twice.⁸ While in prison, Bahraini authorities kept Rajab under solitary confinement in unsanitary conditions. On 28 June 2016, and again on 24 August 2016, Rajab was transferred to a hospital due to health concerns related to his imprisonment. On 12 July 2016, Bahrain's High Criminal Court postponed Rajab's trial to 2 August 2016.⁹ Authorities postponed his trial a second time on 2 August to 5 September 2016.¹⁰ If convicted he could face up to 15 years in prison.¹¹

Joint Statements 3, 4, and 5 have all raised similar concerns in regards to political prisoners. In the years since 2011, the Bahraini Police has continued to target protesters and charge citizens with crimes related to the 2011 protests.

II. Accountability for Bahraini Officials

Joint Statement 1 also calls for Bahrain to hold public officials accountable for crimes they have committed. Since 2011, human rights organizations have documented dozens of extrajudicial killings, both directly and indirectly attributable to Bahraini security forces.¹² Between 2011 and 2013, the Bahraini police reportedly killed 80 individuals in protests, and by 2015 this number reached almost 100.¹³ The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) of Bahrain's Public Prosecution Office (PPO), which is tasked with investigating Bahraini officials involved in unlawful killings, torture, and other human rights violations, has produced only two police convictions as of 2015.¹⁴ In these two cases, Bahraini courts convicted the two officers of assault, in the case of the death of Abdul Karim Fakhrawi who was fatally tortured. However, the courts charged neither of them with

5 "Bahraini government continues to target civil society for human rights work," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 13 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/10421/>

6 "Bahrain: Ensure Ebrahim Sharif's Conviction is Quashed (UA 168/15)," Amnesty International, 27 July 2016, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/get-involved/take-action-now/bahrain-ensure-ebrahim-sharif-s-conviction-is-quashed-ua-16815>

7 "Bahrain: new arrest and arbitrary detention of Nabeel Rajab," International Federation for Human Rights, 14 June 2016, <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/new-arrest-and-arbitrary-detention-of-mr-nabeel-rajab>

8 Jen Marlowe, "Crackdown in Bahrain," The Huffington Post, 12 July 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jen-marlowe/crackdown-in-bahrain_b_10894358.html

9 "Bahrain extends arbitrary detention of BCHR's President Nabeel Rajab, court postpones his trial to 2 August," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 12 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/bahrain-extends-arbitrary-detention-bchrs-president-nabeel-rajab-court-postpones-trial-2-august/>

10 "Nabeel Rajab trial postponed, faces prison over tweets," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2 August 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/08/nabeel-rajab-trial-postponed-faces-prison-tweets/>

11 Ibid.

12 "Bahraini government continues to target civil society for human rights work," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain.

13 "Individuals Killed By Government's Excessive Use of Force Since 14 February 2011," Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 6 February 2015, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/3864>

14 *A follow-up report on Bahrain's UPR Second Cycle: The Deteriorating Human Rights Situation in Bahrain*, (Washington, D.C.: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2014)

murder or torture resulting in death,¹⁵ which warrants a life sentence under Bahraini law.¹⁶ The severity of their sentences was not commensurate with the gravity of their offenses. Additionally, Bahraini courts reduced their initial seven-year prison sentences to three years following an appeal.¹⁷ Ultimately, the SIU lacks the independence to guarantee impartial investigations of public officials, and the government has not pursued dedicated prosecution of security personnel through other means.

III. Engagement with UN Bodies

Joint Statement 1 called for the establishment of a UN High Commissioner's office (OHCHR) in Bahrain. Presently, the Government of Bahrain continues to inhibit cooperation with the OHCHR. The government has not allowed for an UN Special Procedures mandate holder to visit the country since 2006, and has subsequently denied or canceled seven attempts by the Procedures to conduct a visit.¹⁸ Despite sporadic, isolated training events hosted by OHCHR in Bahrain, the government has consistently forestalled negotiations for the establishment of an OHCHR office in the kingdom. Additionally, recent actions by the Bahraini government to impose travel bans on individuals who had taken part in OHCHR training programs, constitute a new practice of reprisals against human rights defenders for their cooperation with OHCHR. The Bahraini government's non-cooperation with the OHCHR has stalled any substantial progress in establishing a permanent OHCHR presence in Bahrain.

Joint Statement 2, released in February 2013, urged Bahrain to specifically allow the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to conduct a visit. Initially, the Bahraini government had approved the visitation request from the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. The visit was expected to take place in May 2013, but was effectively cancelled one month prior when the government postponed the trip indefinitely.¹⁹ The likelihood of the trip being rescheduled is low, considering that the Bahraini government offered no alternative dates for a visit. According to the Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, the indefinite postponement did not come as a surprise and is a common practice for Bahrain.²⁰

IV. The Bahrain 13

In Joint Statement 2, the signatories called attention to the cases of the "Bahrain 13," a group of Bahraini activists, human rights defenders, and opposition figures imprisoned by the government in 2011. Despite concerns the fairness of the trial and of the political nature of their charges, in early 2013, Bahraini courts upheld the life-sentences of many of the "Bahrain 13."²¹ With the exception of Salah al-Khawaja and Ebrahim Sharif, the government continues to imprison 11 of the 13 activists. The remaining prisoners have exhausted their appeals process, meaning their only remaining avenue for release is a Royal Pardon.²²

15 Ibid

16 "Royal Decree 52 – Amendments to Penal Code Articles 208 and 232," Kingdom of Bahrain, 2012, https://www.biciactions.bh/wps/themes/html/BICI/pdf/1719/amendment_penal_code_article_208_232_en.pdf

17 *Shattering the Facade: a report on Bahrain's implementation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) recommendations four years on* (Washington, D.C.: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2015)

18 "View Country visits of Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council since 1998," United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, http://spinternet.ohchr.org/_Layouts/SpecialProceduresInternet/ViewCountryVisits.aspx?Lang=en&country=BHR

19 "Bahrain / Human rights: Government effectively cancels UN Special Rapporteur on torture's visit," United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, 24 April 2013, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13261>

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 "Bahrain rejects jailed opposition activists' appeal," *BBC*, 7 January 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20930702>

V. Widespread Denaturalization

Joint Statements 2 and 4 expressly request the Government of Bahrain to discontinue its use of citizenship revocation as reprisal against human rights defenders and activists. Since the international community's initial call in 2013, which referenced 31 cases, the authorities have only increased their use of punitive denaturalization. The July 2014 amendments to the 1963 Citizenship Law now permit the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) to revoke the citizenship of Bahrainis who "cause harm to the interests of the kingdom," act in ways that contravene their loyalty to the state, or aid in the service of a hostile state.²³ Bahraini authorities have also exploited the broad discretionary authority provided under the 2014 amendments to continue utilizing denaturalization to silence dissidents. Since the unrest of 2011, the Bahraini authorities have denaturalized over 300 Bahraini citizens.²⁴ The government revoked the citizenship of approximately 208 individuals in 2015 alone.²⁵

Many of these denaturalized Bahrainis are rendered stateless and subsequently deported to Lebanon. In February 2015, the government released a list of 72 persons whose citizenship it had revoked. On that list were human rights defenders, political activists, journalists, academics, and religious scholars.²⁶ In 2016, the government deported human rights lawyer Taimoor Karimi. The government had revoked his citizenship in 2012, along with 30 other journalists, human rights defenders, and opposition figures in 2012.²⁷

On 20 June 2016, the Government of Bahrain revoked the citizenship of Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim at the request of the MOI. Sheikh Isa Qassim is a prominent Shia cleric, and widely regarded as the spiritual leader of Bahrain's Shia community. In conjunction with his denaturalization, the government called for his deportation.²⁸ This decision sparked international condemnation and large demonstrations outside Sheikh Isa Qassim's home in Diraz.²⁹ In addition, Bahraini authorities forbid him "to respond to the accusations against him before this decision was taken, or challenge the decision through a transparent legal process."³⁰

VI. Impartiality of Bahrain's Special Investigation Unit

Joint Statements 2, 3, and 4 raise concern for the independence and impartiality of Bahrain's SIU. In 2012, the Government of Bahrain established the SIU within the PPO to carry out investigations into reports of governmental and police malpractice.³¹ Nevertheless, the SIU remains a part of the government hierarchy under the authority of the PPO's Attorney General, who has directly overseen the prosecution of individuals on charges related solely to free expression, assembly, and/or association.³² As noted above, the SIU has failed to hold accountable the vast majority of public officials responsible for human rights violations in Bahrain; those who it has prosecuted

23 *Shattering the Facade: a report on Bahrain's implementation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) recommendations four years on* (Washington, D.C.: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2015)

24 "Infographic: Timeline of Citizenship Revocation," Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy, 10 February 2016, <http://birdbh.org/2016/02/infographic-timeline-of-citizenship-revocation/>

25 Ibid.

26 "HRC32: ADHRB calls attention to citizenship revocation in Bahrain," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 14 June 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/hrc32-adhrb-highlights-crackdown-civil-society-bahrain/>

27 "Bahraini officials deport human rights lawyer Taimoor Karimi," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 1 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/bahraini-officials-deport-human-rights-lawyer-taimoor-karimi/>

28 "Eminent Shia Cleric Stripped of Citizenship, Faces Deportation," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 20 June 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/eminant-shia-cleric-stripped-citizenship-faces-deportation/>

29 Ibid

30 John Kirby, "Statement On the Citizenship Revocation of Sheikh Isa Qassim," U.S. Department of State, 20 June 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/06/258908.htm>

31 *Shattering the Facade: a report on Bahrain's implementation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) recommendations four years on* (Washington, D.C.: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2015)

32 Ibid.

are largely low-level officials who have received lenient sentences. Bahraini residents continue to level allegations of torture at both the PPO and the MOI's Criminal Investigations Department (CID), raising further questions concerning the impartiality and effectiveness of the SIU, which retains strong connections to both.³³ The SIU has also failed to complete a number of legitimate investigations, and ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD have even received reports that SIU officials have purposefully intimidated complainants.³⁴

This SIU's failure to hold perpetrators accountable can be also be seen in the case of Naji Fateel. The co-founder of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR), was sentenced to 15 years in prison after he documented human rights violations during the pro-democracy movement in 2011.³⁵ Fateel repeatedly alleged being tortured in detention at the CID. The SIU reported to Amnesty International that it had questioned Fateel about the allegations twice in 2013. However, in its response to the U.S. Department of State's 2013 country human rights report, the Ministry of Interior denied Fateel's allegations.³⁶

VII. Recommendations Made by the Bahrain National Assembly

Members of the international community, in Joint Statement 3, expressed concern for 22 recommendations announced by the Bahrain National Assembly 28 July 2013, urging the government to refrain from implementing them.³⁷ The new set of recommendations largely expand Bahrain's already broad anti-terror law as well as the ability of the state to suppress human rights defenders.³⁸ The recommendations directly infringe on the right to nonviolent free assembly by "banning sit-ins, rallies and gatherings," within the capital of Manama.³⁹ The recommendations also confirm the government's authority to revoke the citizenship of those who it believes to be involved in terror or inciting violence.⁴⁰ One of the recommendations also grants authorities the power to close political societies that incite acts of violence and terrorism.⁴¹ As the Bahraini government maintains a broad interpretation of its ambiguous anti-terror legislation that includes many acts of nonviolent free expression, these recommendations increase the authorities' power to target dissent. In July 2016, a Bahraini judge used the anti-terror law to dissolve the country's largest opposition group, Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, on the grounds that it was fostering "violence and terror."⁴² The UN widely condemned the Bahraini government's decision to close Al-Wefaq as another move to undermine peaceful opposition and infringe on the rights to free association and expression in Bahrain.⁴³

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 "Recommendations of the Extraordinary Session of the National Assembly," Bahrain News Agency, 28 July 2013, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/573207>

38 "Crown Prince affirms His Majesty the King's directives to implement National Assembly's recommendations," *Bahrain News Agency*, 28 July 2013, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/573229>

39 "Recommendations of the Extraordinary Session of the National Assembly," *Bahrain News Agency*, 28 July 2013, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/573207>

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 "Bahrain dissolves main Shia opposition Al-Wefaq party," *Al-Jazeera*, 17 July 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/07/bahrain-dissolves-main-opposition-party-160717132556468.html>

43 "UN's Ban Ki Moon Concerned by Al-Wefaq Suspension & Intimidation of HR Defenders in Bahrain," *Bahrain Mirror*, 17 July 2016, <http://mirror.no-ip.org/en/news/31815.html>

VIII. Crackdown against Freedom of Speech and Expression for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists

Joint Statements 4 and 5 called attention to the Bahraini government's increased repression of free speech and free expression, particularly in the case of human rights defenders and journalists. Bahraini authorities continue to target activists and have exploited broad media, anti-terror, and anti-cybercrime legislation to prosecute journalists and/or restrict their work. Along with imprisoned human rights defender Nabeel Rajab, Bahraini officials have harassed and jailed a number of prominent activists including Maryam and Zainab al-Khawaja, the daughters of imprisoned human rights defender Abdulhadi al-Khawaja. Bahraini police have repeatedly targeted both sisters for expressing peaceful criticism of the government.⁴⁴ Although Zainab al-Khawaja was recently released from detention on charges related to free expression, the authorities have forced her to join her sister in exile.

The case of Bahraini journalist Nazeeha Saeed also exemplifies the government's suppression of journalism and free speech. Bahraini authorities called Saeed in for questioning in May 2011 due to her reporting on the Pearl Roundabout protests. Officials repeatedly beat her during the interrogation.⁴⁵ Police officers poured urine on her face, forced a shoe into her mouth, and made her imitate a donkey.⁴⁶ Since then, Bahraini authorities have also prevented Saeed from leaving the country on multiple occasions, despite the government insisting that they had not imposed a travel ban on her.⁴⁷ This informal travel ban against Saeed is in conflict with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Bahrain has acceded, because it inhibits her freedom of movement.⁴⁸ On 17 July 2016, the Public Prosecution charged⁴⁹ Nazeeha under article 88 of Law 47/2002, which state that no Bahraini can work for foreign media outlets without first obtaining a license from the Information Affairs Authority (IAA), and must be renewed annually.⁵⁰ Nazeeha had applied for a new license prior to the expiration of her current one but the IAA refused the renewal request. Nazeeha now faces trial in the civil courts and a fine up to 1000 Bahraini Dinars (USD \$2650) if found guilty.⁵¹

IX. Detention of Bahraini Minors

Joint Statement 5 expresses concern that Bahraini authorities are holding minors in prison with adults. Despite the government's claim that minors are no longer kept in adult correctional facilities, human rights organizations have reported that up to 500 Bahraini children were incarcerated in adult prisons as of 2015.⁵² The government has also denied children access to both medical care and education during their detention. Additionally, Bahraini police have subjected minors to the same abusive practices as they do adults, such as arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. While in prison, Bahraini interrogators intimidate children into becoming informants against their families. The government has reportedly used the detention of children as a means of reprisal against adult members of the family.⁵³

44 "Bahrain arrests top human rights activist," *Al-Jazeera*, 31 August 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/bahrain-arrests-top-human-rights-activist-20148312565870398.html>

45 Jesse Schatz, "Travel Ban Prevents Journalist From Leaving Bahrain," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 7 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/10317/>

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 "Reporter questioned over work without authorization," *Bahrain News Agency*, 17 July 2016, <http://bna.bh/portal/en/news/736243>

50 "44 NGOs to Government of Bahrain: Rights of Nazeeha Saeed and all journalists must be respected," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 28 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/42-ngos-government-bahrain-rights-nazeeha-saeed-journalists-must-respected/>

51 Ibid.

52 "Bahrain authorities arrest yet another child," Amnesty International, 3 October 2013, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/childrens-human-rights-network/bahrain-authorities-arrest-yet-another-child>

53 "Bahrain 2015 Human Rights Report," U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2016, <http://bahrain.usembassy.gov/policy/human-rights-report.html>

Conclusion

The five joint statements passed at the Human Rights Council over the past five years indicate the severity of the human rights situation in Bahrain. States have repeatedly voiced their concerns over ongoing violations of freedom of speech, expression, assembly, and suppression of civil society space. In the earlier joint statements, states did comment on steps Bahrain had taken to address some issues but in recent years, Bahrain has not made any improvements to merit further accolades. Because the human rights situation continues to deteriorate, the international community must increase its pressure on the Government of Bahrain.

PART 2

European Union Parliament Resolutions on Human Rights in Bahrain

Since 2011, the European Union Parliament has passed eight resolutions concerning human rights in Bahrain. The resolutions have covered thematic issues such as medical impartiality, citizenship revocation, human rights violations of children, and the role of the judiciary. Additionally the resolutions have also referenced specific cases such as Mohammed Ramadan, an individual who remains on death row in Bahrain. The following section provides an overview and update of the issues raised in the resolutions.

Summary of Issues Raised in European Parliament Resolutions

I. Abuses against Medical Professionals

Since the European Parliament's (EP) first resolution on Bahrain in October 2011, issues surrounding the Bahraini government's abuses against individuals in the medical profession have been a reoccurring theme. Following the government's initial suppression of the pro-democracy protests, the EU parliament released Resolution 1. The resolution specifically condemns the Bahraini government's repression and detention of doctors and nurses involved in the 2011 protests. Additionally, the EP urged the government to ensure that civilian courts retry all medical professionals convicted in Bahraini military courts, if it would not simply drop the charges against them. The resolution calls on Bahraini authorities to allow all medics to resume their jobs and have access to Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BIC) data concerning medical examinations. Resolution 2, released in March 2012, raises similar concerns, calling for the release of all doctors and nurses who remain imprisoned due to their association with the protests. In addition to their release, the EP calls on the Bahraini judiciary to drop all charges levied against medical professionals related to their activism or association with the protests. In January 2013, the EU issued Resolution 3, which echoed its predecessors in calling for the release of still-imprisoned doctors and nurses. Later that year, in September 2013, the issue is briefly mentioned in Resolution 4, which again calls for the release of detained doctors and specifically notes detained paramedics.

UPDATE

At time of writing, the Government of Bahrain continues to uphold the sentences of doctors convicted in association with pro-democracy protests. In March 2016, an international group of over 150 medical professionals called for the unconditional release of surgeon Ali Esa Mansoor al-Ekri whom Bahraini police arrested in 2011 for tending to wounded protesters. While in prison, Bahraini authorities tortured Dr. al-Ekri.⁵⁴ On 10 June 2016, Bahraini officials prevented Dr. Taha Al-Dirazi and his wife from leaving the country to visit relatives in the United Kingdom.⁵⁵ Like many of his counterparts, Dr. al-Dirazi was arrested during protests, but was subsequently released. In August 2016, the authorities arrested Dr. al-Dirazi after a lengthy interrogation on

54 Ali Al Ekri, "A Bahraini doctor- tortured and imprisoned for treating patients- pleads to the US for help," GlobalPost, 29 September 2015, <http://www.globalpost.com/article/6657008/2015/09/25/bahraini-doctor-tortured-molested-and-imprisoned-treating-patients-blames>

55 "Bahrain escalates crackdown on civil society in month of repression," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, July 1, 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/bahrain-escalates-crackdown-civil-society-month-repression/>

new charges of “illegal gathering” related to his participation in a peaceful sit-in in Diraz. While Bahraini courts reduced or dismissed the sentences of several imprisoned Bahraini doctors, the government’s targeting of Dr. al-Dirazi and Dr. al-Ekri demonstrate that government continues to commit human rights abuses against medical professionals.⁵⁶

II. Citizenship Revocation

In recent years, the Government of Bahrain has used the practice of citizenship revocation as a punishment for those who protest against or otherwise criticize the government. The EP first raises this issue in Resolution 3, released in January 2013. The resolution came after Bahrain revoked the citizenship of 31 activists who were associated with the political opposition society Al-Wefaq.⁵⁷ The resolution asserts that stripping an individual of citizenship due to that person’s political beliefs is in direct conflict with international law. In Resolution 4, the EP raises citizenship revocation in the context of human rights violations such as statelessness. Most recently, Resolution 8, issued in July 2016, condemns the Bahraini government’s increased usage of the practice, placing the number of denaturalized Bahraini citizens at over 300. More specifically, the joint resolution condemns the July 2016 citizenship revocation of Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim, a prominent Shia religious cleric. The statement makes clear that his denaturalization is in direct conflict with Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

UPDATE

The Bahraini government has given no indication that is curbing its use of denaturalization. In 2015, the Bahraini government issued a mass denaturalization order that stripped 72 Bahrainis of their citizenship. The authorities legitimized their actions by claiming that the individuals were undermining national security, though the vast majority were targeted for peacefully exercising their rights to free expression and assembly.⁵⁸ After the government denaturalized Ayatollah Isa Qassim in 2016, mass demonstrations have emerged in protest of the decision.⁵⁹ The authorities have not yet deported Sheikh Qassim, but they have also begun prosecuting him on money laundering charges relating solely to the Shia religious practice of *khums* – a traditional payment to religious clergy for distribution to those in need. His trial has been postponed until 15 September 2016.⁶⁰

III. Endorsement of Democratic Ideals

From the start of the 2011 pro-democracy movement, the EU parliament has called for greater democratic reform in Bahrain. Resolution 1, released in October 2011, explicitly endorses the goals of many protestors, calling them “legitimate democratic aspirations.”⁶¹ The EP has expressed a desire to see the government implement the reforms requested by the protestors and engage in a meaningful democratic dialogue. In January 2013, the EP reiterated its support for democracy in Bahrain while expressing disappointment regarding the government’s inability to fully realize the BICI recommendations. In Resolution 4, the EP again called on the Bahraini government to

56 Samia Nakhoul, “Bahrain eases medic sentences, U.S. ‘deeply disappointed,’” Reuters, 14 June 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-bahrain-medics-idUSBRE85D1D920120614>

57 “Bahrain revokes 31 opposition activists’ citizenship,” BBC, 7 November 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20235542>

58 “Bahrain revokes nationality of 72 people,” BBC, January 31, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31075216>

59 “Diraz: a community under siege,” Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 13 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/10390/>

60 “Continued crackdown on clerics and freedom of religion and assembly,” Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy, 27 July 2016, <http://birdbh.org/2016/07/continued-crackdown-on-clerics-and-freedom-of-religion-and-assembly/>

61 European Union, European Parliament, “Bahrain,” P7_TA(2011)0475, 27 October 2011, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONGML+TA+P7-TA-2011-0475+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

implement the “necessary democratic reforms,” which it directly linked with the release of political prisoners in Bahrain.

UPDATE

The Bahraini government has instituted few substantive democratic reforms. In recent years, the government has only escalated its repression of Bahraini civil society. The Bahraini authorities have taken additional punitive measures against civil society leaders like Nabeel Rajab, Zainab al-Khawaja, Sheikh Isa Qassim, and Al-Wefaq Secretary-General Sheikh Ali Salman in 2016 alone.⁶² Simultaneously, it has further undermined national dialogue and popular political participation by dissolving the largest opposition society, Al-Wefaq.⁶³ During the 32nd UN Human Rights Council (HRC) session in Geneva, Bahraini authorities prevented a number of human rights defenders, activists, and families of victims from leaving the country to attend the session.⁶⁴ The government commonly imposes travel bans as a means of punish and silencing peaceful dissent. Most recently, the Government of Bahrain has begun summoning, interrogating, and arresting Shia religious figures and clerics.⁶⁵ From June to August 2016, the authorities subjected more than 50 Shia religious leaders to judicial harassment related solely to free expression and assembly.⁶⁶ The systematic targeting of the Shia community has reached such a level that on 16 August 2016, five UN special procedures issued a joint statement calling for an end to the “persecution” of Bahrain’s Shia community, noting that “Shias are clearly being targeted on the basis of their religion.”⁶⁷

IV. Role of Gulf Cooperation Council

Beginning with the October 2011 resolution, the EP condemned the Bahraini government’s decision to request the deployment of a contingent of the Gulf Cooperation Council’s (GCC) Peninsula Shield Force (PSF), a joint military command that in this case contained Saudi and Emirati security personnel, to quell the protests. The EP calls on the larger GCC states to act towards Bahrain in a way that fosters peace and dialogue. The role of the GCC as it relates to Bahrain reemerges in EP Resolution 3, where the EP internally agreed to determine an itinerary for an upcoming GCC-EP summit that predicated on the release of political prisoners.

V. Human Rights Violations against Children

In January 2013, Resolution 3 raised issues pertaining to violations of children’s rights in Bahrain. The EP called on the Government of Bahrain to conduct an impartial investigation into reports of police arresting, detaining, and torturing minors associated with their alleged participation in demonstrations. Resolution 4 also called on Bahrain to respect the rights of children, specifically noting that the Bahraini authorities’ treatment of children is in direct violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The EP’s call for the Government of Bahrain to respect the Convention on the Rights of the Child is reiterated in Resolution 5.

62 “Bahrain escalates crackdown on civil society in month of repression,” Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain

63 “Bahraini court dissolves Al-Wefaq, the largest political opposition part in the country,” Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 17 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/repression-freedom-association-bahrain-dissolves-al-wefaq-largest-political-society-country/>

64 Brian Dooley, “Bahrain hits civil society leaders with travel bans,” The Huffington Post, 18 July 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brian-dooley/bahrain-hits-civil-societ_b_11056882.html

65 Brian Dooley, “Bahrain targets clerics in new wave of attacks,” The Huffington Post, 12 August 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brian-dooley/bahrain-targets-clerics-i_b_11476940.html

66 “Continued crackdown on clerics and freedom of religion and assembly,” Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 27 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/continued-crackdown-clerics-freedom-religion-assembly/>

67 “UN rights experts urge Bahrain to end the persecution of Shias,” UN Office of the High Commissioner, 16 August 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20375&LangID=E>

UPDATE

To date, Bahraini authorities continues to detain and abuse minors for alleged connections to the protest movement. For more information on child detainees, see Part 1, Section IX, above.

VI. Capital Punishment

Following an unofficial moratorium on the death penalty during the early 2000s, the Bahraini government reportedly resumed the practice in 2006 with the execution of three migrant workers.⁶⁸ In Resolution 7, the EP formally condemned the state's return to the practice. This condemnation came after a Bahraini court sentenced Mohammad Ramadan to death in 2014 for his alleged involvement in a bomb explosion.⁶⁹ Ramadan and another defendant maintain their innocence and claim that they only confessed after Bahraini police tortured them for days. Resolution 7 calls for Bahrain to implement another moratorium on the death penalty.

UPDATE

Although its last execution took place in 2010, Bahraini courts have continued to hand down more death sentences every year, including one issued as recently as 31 December 2015.⁷⁰ It is unclear when the authorities intend to carry out these death sentences, but prisoners like Mohammad Ramadan remain at constant risk of execution.⁷¹ Currently, there are a total of 10 persons on death row in the country.⁷²

VII. Courts and the Bahraini Judiciary

Since 2011, the EP has been highly critical of the Bahraini judicial system. Resolution 1 condemned the Bahraini government's practice of trying civilians in military courts during the unrest of 2011, urging that it instead ensure a free and fair trial for all accused. Specifically, it demanded that every civilian have access to legal counsel with sufficient preparation time. Additionally, the resolution expressed concern regarding the Bahraini judiciary's usage of mass-trials in delivering verdicts. In Resolution 2, the EP called for the courts to reverse or drop all convictions related to freedom of speech or freedom of expression violations. The EP went further in Resolution 3, questioning the impartiality of the Bahraini court system and urging the government to take steps to ensure the independence of the judiciary. Resolution 3 specifically requested that the Bahraini government depoliticize the courts.

VIII. Release of Political Prisoners

In addition to the detention of medical personnel, the EP also called for the release or retrial of all human rights defenders. Resolution 1 strongly criticized the arrests and sentences of political activists, teachers, journalists, and bloggers who spoke out against the Government of Bahrain. In

68 "Sacrifice to the state: capital punishment in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2015, <http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Sacrifice-to-the-State-Capital-Punishment.pdf>; "Migrant workers and the death penalti in Bahrain & Saudi Arabia," Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 16 March 2010, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/3054>

69 "Rights groups condemn death penalty sentence of Mohammed Ramadan and Husain Ali Moosa," International Federation for Human Rights, 16 December 2015, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/north-africa-middle-east/bahrain/rights-groups-condemn-death-penalty-sentence-of-mohammed-ramadan-and>

70 "NGOs condemn death sentences in Bahrain after record year," International Federation for Human Rights, 8 January 2016, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/north-africa-middle-east/bahrain/ngos-condemn-death-sentences-in-bahrain-after-record-year>

71 "Mohammad Ramadan and Husain Moosa death sentence upheld, despite strong allegations of torture," Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy, 27 May 2015, <http://birdbh.org/2015/05/mohammad-ramadan-and-husain-moosa-death-sentence-upheld-despite-strong-allegations-of-torture/>

72 "NGOs condemn death sentences in Bahrain after record year," International Federation for Human Rights, 8 January 2016, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/north-africa-middle-east/bahrain/ngos-condemn-death-sentences-in-bahrain-after-record-year>

the same resolution, the EP called for the Bahraini authorities to allow international inspectors to observe trial proceedings of human rights defenders. In Resolution 3, the EP again criticized the Bahraini government's arbitrary detention of human rights defenders. The resolution specifically points to the cases of Sayed Yousif al-Muhafadha, Nabeel Rajab, and Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, all prominent members of BCHR. Resolution 3 also call on the EP to devise its own plan of action to work toward securing the release of Bahraini political prisoners. This call was reiterated in Resolution 4, which noted additional high-profile cases such as that of Zainab al-Khawaja. A nearly identical call for the release of political prisoners is repeated in Resolution 5. In Resolution 8, the parliament specifically calls attention to the imprisonment of Nabeel Rajab. Joint Resolution 8 also reminded the Bahraini government of its obligations under international law to observe the human rights of prisoners.

UPDATE

Many Bahraini human rights activists remain in detention. In some instances, those specifically mentioned in EP resolutions have since been released, such as Maryam al-Khawaja and Zainab al-Khawaja. In other instances, the Bahraini government has re-arrested previously released human rights defenders, such as Nabeel Rajab. Bahraini security forces have kept Rajab in unsanitary conditions and solitary confinement. Rajab was rushed to a military hospital on multiple occasions due to a heart condition that was exacerbated by his detention.⁷³ Jau Prison is home to a number of prominent human rights defenders and activists. In 2015, the prison experienced a riot as prisoners protested their treatment in the increasingly overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions.⁷⁴ Bahraini authorities responded *en masse*, despite only a minority of inmates participating in the riot, with excessive force.⁷⁵ Prisoners at Jau continue to deal with over incarceration, uninhabitable prison conditions, deprivation of essential healthcare, and abusive practices of prison staff.⁷⁶ The Bahraini government continues to imprison a number of other Bahraini human rights defenders not mentioned in EP resolutions. Ghada Jamsheer, the head of a Bahraini women's rights network, for example, is currently at risk of re-arrest. The authorities previously released Jamsheer after a brief detention related to her criticism of the government in 2014. However, a Bahraini court recently sentenced her to a one-year suspended sentence in relation to a series of tweets in which she accused the King Hamad Hospital of discrimination. Bahraini police could arrest her at any time.⁷⁷ It is currently estimated that there are over 3,000 political prisoners in Bahrain.⁷⁸

IX. Torture

Beginning with Resolution 2, the EP is highly critical of the Bahraini authorities' widespread use of torture against political activists. The resolution emphasized Bahrain's obligations to the Committee Against Torture (CAT). The resolution specifically criticized the government's use of torture to secure confessions, calling on the Government of Bahrain to halt its use of torture and guarantee fair trials. In Resolution 3, the EP reiterated its call on Bahraini authorities to cease all forms of torture, including the torture of children. Resolution 4 urged Bahrain to independently investigate all reports of torture and prosecute officials who were found to have engaged in the

73 "Case history: Nabeel Rajab," Front Line Defenders, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-nabeel-rajab>

74 *Inside Jaw: Government Brutality in Bahrain's Central Prison*, (Washington, D.C.: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2015).

75 *Ibid.*

76 *Ibid.*

77 "Ghada Jamsheer at risk of re-arrest for tweets," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 11 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/ghada-jamsheer-risk-re-arrest-tweets/>

78 *Inside Jaw: Government Brutality in Bahrain's Central Prison*, (Washington, D.C.: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2015).

practice. Resolution 4 also expressed regret that Bahrain postponed the expected visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. In Resolution 5, the EP echoed previous complaints about the Bahraini government's use of torture, while also calling for it to allow a visit by the Special Rapporteur on Torture. Resolutions 6 and 7 condemned torture in the specific cases of Nabeel Rajab and Mohammad Ramadan, respectively. In Resolution 8, the EP again called for an end to torture in Bahrain in line with the country's CAT commitments.

UPDATE

Despite international outcry, Bahraini authorities continue to use torture as a means of retaliating against activists and securing confessions. Most recently, ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD received reports that security forces tortured Hassan Jassim Hasan al-Hayki, possibly leading to his sudden death on 31 July 2016.⁷⁹ Though the government claims he died of natural causes, Al-Hayki's family has confirmed that he did not suffer from any prior medical condition that could have led to a premature death.⁸⁰ According to his family, al-Hayki initially refused to sign a confession, allegedly prompting the authorities to further sexually abuse him and threaten him at gunpoint.⁸¹ In late July, when his family was able to see him, they reported that al-Hayki appeared dangerously thin. Following his death, the al-Hayki family requested an investigation and formal autopsy.⁸² After a nine days, Bahrain's SIU concluded its investigation and ruled out "any criminal suspicion."⁸³ Four days later, the PPO charged an unnamed lawyer with "publicly spreading false information with the intention of influencing the judicial authority in charge of the case" after he allegedly disagreed with the SIU's findings, telling "a local newspaper that there were injuries and bruises on the body of the deceased that proved beyond any doubt a criminal suspicion."⁸⁴ He has since been released and is awaiting trial.⁸⁵

Conclusion

The eight European Parliament resolutions have all addressed numerous human rights violations in Bahrain. Today in Bahrain, torture remains systematic and wide-spread, the number of political prisoners is in the thousands, the government is using denaturalization as a tool to silence dissidents, and it has expanded laws to criminalize all forms of dissent. The Bahraini authorities have effectively suppressed civil society in Bahrain making the prospects of national dialogue near impossible. As the updates illustrate, the government of Bahrain has done little to stop human rights violations and steers further away from its international obligation to safeguard human rights.

79 "Independent and impartial investigation needed into the death and alleged torture of detainee," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 1 August 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/08/10556/>

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 "No criminal suspicion in detainee's death: SIU," Bahrain News Agency, 10 August 2016, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/739387>

84 "Lawyer charged with disseminating false information," Bahrain News Agency, 14 August 2016, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/739869>

85 Ibid.

PART 3

Statements by the UN Secretary-General, OHCHR, and Special Procedures

UN Secretary-General

The office of the UN Secretary-General has issued 16 statements concerning Bahrain since the February 2011 pro-democracy movement. These statements reiterate many of the concerns raised at the HRC and in the EP resolutions. The Secretary-General has consistently called for “national dialogue” amongst all parties in Bahrain in an effort to “ensure justice and human rights for all Bahrainis.”⁸⁶ Some statements have corresponded to specific events, such as the one issued on 18 July 2016 in response to the denaturalization of Sheikh Isa Qassim.⁸⁷ Others focus on longstanding issues: as many as seven call on the government “to complete the full implementation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry’s recommendations.”⁸⁸ All of the statements by the Secretary-General highlight the need to continue pressure on the Government of Bahrain as the human rights situation continues to deteriorate.

The Secretary-General has consistently called attention to the ongoing suppression of freedom of expression, assembly, and association in Bahrain. On 1 November 2012, the Secretary-General issued a statement expressing his “concern about the restrictions on public demonstrations and other public gatherings declared by authorities in Bahrain on 30 October.”⁸⁹ This was in response to the Bahraini government’s announcement of a ban on all protest gatherings.⁹⁰ On 16 July 2016, the Secretary-General’s statement expressed “dismay” in response to the government’s arrest of human rights defender Nabeel Rajab, the dissolution of the largest political opposition bloc, Al-Wefaq, and the lengthening of Sheikh Ali Salman’s sentence.⁹¹ The most recent statement by the Secretary-General called attention to Bahrain’s increased use of travel bans against human rights defenders.⁹² There have been three additional statements from the Secretary-General in regards to the issues of freedom of expression, assembly, and association in Bahrain: on 30 September 2011,⁹³ 14 March 2011,⁹⁴ 5 September 2012.⁹⁵

86 “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 24 January 2013, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2013-01-24/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-bahrain>

87 “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 18 July 2016, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2016-07-18/statement-attributable-spokesman-secretary-general-bahrain>

88 “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 5 September 2012, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2012-09-05/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-bahrain>

89 “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 1 November 2012, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2012-11-01/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-bahrain>

90 Ian Black, “Bahrain bans all opposition rallies,” *The Guardian*, 30 October 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/30/bahrain-opposition-protests-ban>

91 “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 18 July 2016, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2016-07-18/statement-attributable-spokesman-secretary-general-bahrain>

92 Ibid.

93 “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 5 September 2012, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2012-09-05/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-bahrain>

94 “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 1 November 2012, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2012-11-01/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-bahrain>

95 “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 5 September 2012, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2012-09-05/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-bahrain>

The Bahraini government's recent decision to dissolve Al-Wefaq, along with its targeted campaign against opposition leaders and activists, specifically continues to undermine the Secretary-General's call for national dialogue amongst all stakeholders. Thirteen out of the 16 statements issued by the Secretary-General have all mentioned the importance of national dialogue.⁹⁶ The Secretary-General has called on the "government and people of Bahrain to engage in an all-inclusive, meaningful dialogue in order to defuse tensions, promote reforms and foster reconciliation."⁹⁷ In his most recent statement on 18 July 2016, the Secretary-General again called "for the resumption of an all-inclusive national dialogue in the interest of peace and stability of Bahrain and the region," following repressive measures taken by the Bahraini government that risked "escalating an already tense situation in the country."⁹⁸ The government has yet to take any steps to towards the resumption of a real national political dialogue; rather, it has intensified its restrictions on the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression.

Another consistent theme in the Secretary-General's statement has been to call on the Bahraini government to fully implement the 26 BICI recommendations. As noted above, seven of the 16 statements include a version of "the Secretary-General again calls on the Bahraini Government to complete the full implementation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry's recommendations."⁹⁹ The 26 BICI recommendations addressed a number of systematic government abuses, including lack of accountability for government officials accused of ill-treatment and torture.¹⁰⁰ Though the Bahraini government announced the full implementation of all 26 BICI recommendations in May 2016,¹⁰¹ ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD have found that only two of the 26 BICI recommendations have so far been fully implemented.¹⁰² For example, the government regularly claims that BICI recommendation 1722(b) – to establish an independent oversight body to investigate allegations of torture – is fully implemented, as it created the MOI's Ombudsman Office, the PPO's SIU, and the National Institute of Human Rights (NIHR).¹⁰³ Not one of these institutions is meets standards to be independent or impartial, however,¹⁰⁴ and all three have failed to hold the vast majority of perpetrators accountable for human rights violations in Bahrain.¹⁰⁵

The Secretary-General has also raised concerns regarding the impartiality of Bahrain's judiciary. In a statement released following the "harsh" life imprisonment sentences handed down to 21 political activists, the Secretary-General urged the "Bahraini authorities to allow all defendants to exercise their right to appeal and to act in strict accordance with their international human rights

96 Statements issued on: 10 March 2011, 14 March 2011, 1 June 2011, 23 June 2011, 30 September 2011, 24 November 2011, 15 February 2012, 1 November 2012, 8 January 2013, 24 January 2013, 18 July 2013, 16 July 2016, 18 July 2016

97 "Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain," United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 18 July 2013., <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2013-07-18/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-bahrain>

98 Ibid.

99 "Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain," United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 1 November 2012, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2012-11-01/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-bahrain>

100 *Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry*, Bahraini Independent Commission of Inquiry (Manama: Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, 2011).

101 "Bahraini Government's Claims of Having Implemented all BICI Recommendations is Mere Lip Service," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 13 May 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/05/bahraini-governments-claims-implemented-bici-recommendations-mere-lip-service/>

102 *Shattering the Facade: a report on Bahrain's implementation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) recommendations four years on* (Washington, D.C.: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2015)

103 "Bahrain 2014 Human Rights Report," U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/236806.pdf>

104 *Subservient and Unaccountable: A Shadow Report on the Bahraini Ministry of the Interior's Ombudsman and Bahrain National Institute for Human Rights*, (Washington, D.C.: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2014). http://adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ADHRB_Mechanism_Final-web_REV2.pdf

105 Ibid.

obligations, including the right to due process and a fair trial.”¹⁰⁶ On 24 April 2012, the Secretary-General issued a statement specifically expressing “concern” about BCHR cofounder Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, who was among those sentenced to life in prison. The Secretary-General urged “the Bahraini authorities to resolve Mr. Al-Khawaja’s case based on due process and humanitarian considerations without any further delay.”¹⁰⁷ Still, four years later, al-Khawaja remains in prison. Additionally, the authorities continue to use torture to coerce confessions and regularly prevent detainees from obtaining legal counsel.

The statements released by the Secretary-General over the course of the last five years all touch upon pressing issues, which has also been raised by both the HRC joint statements and the EP resolutions. The Secretary-General has remained consistent in calling on the Bahraini government to commit to its international obligations and resume an inclusive national dialogue. Despite the calls for an end to the campaign against civil society and for a renewed commitment to protect human rights, the Bahraini government has failed to comply.

OHCHR/Special Procedures

Within the last three years, the OHCHR and the UN Special Procedures have issued over 20 press releases and briefings regarding the restrictive human rights practices occurring in Bahrain. Less than eight months into 2016, the Special Procedures have already released six statements on Bahrain. Previously, they recently issued three in 2015, seven in 2014, and three in 2013. While some statements focus specifically on particular cases, such as Nabeel Rajab, Sheikh Ali al-Salman, Sheikh Hussein Najati, or Zainab al-Khawaja, many others express concern for more thematic forms of repression in Bahrain. Generally, these statements focus on five issue areas: arbitrary detention, torture and inhuman treatment; freedom of opinion, expression, and association; religious discrimination; human rights defenders; and freedom of peaceful assembly.

I. Arbitrary Detention, Torture, Inhumane Treatment

The Special Procedure’s most recent press release has reiterated the concern for the Bahraini government’s widespread use of arbitrary detention and its failure to adhere to international standards of due process. The 16 August 2016 statement, jointly released by three Special Rapporteurs and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, specifically condemns Bahraini government’s judicial harassment of Shia clerics and human rights defenders, such as Sheikh Isa Qassim and Sheikh Maytham al-Salman. It calls for the authorities to, “stop such arbitrary arrests or summons and release all those who have been detained for exercising their rights.”¹⁰⁸

Torture and inhumane treatment also remain issues in Bahrain, especially as the government has not allowed the Special Rapporteur on torture, Juan Mendez, to visit the country, despite public promises to do so. In a statement from 24 April 2013, the Special Rapporteur expressed concern that the government saw his trip as an obstacle, and cancelled his trip for the second time in one

106 “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 23 June 2011, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2011-06-23/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-bahrain>

107 “Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Bahrain,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 24 April 2012, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2012-04-24/statement-attributable-spokesperson-secretary-general-bahrain>

108 “UN rights experts urge Bahrain to end the persecution of Shias,” UN Office of the High Commissioner, 16 August 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20375&LangID=E>

year.¹⁰⁹ Mr. Mendez also reiterated his regrets to the victims of torture and their families, with whom he was unable to meet.¹¹⁰ Allegations of government torture continue. From 2013 to March 2016, ADHRB documented over 370 victims of government torture.¹¹¹ In July 2016, Hassan Jassim Hasan Al-Hayki died while detained in government custody. The government alleges he died of natural causes, however his family reported he had no previous medical conditions and had told them Bahraini officials had tortured him.¹¹² There has not yet been an independent or impartial investigation into Al-Hayki's death.

The Government of Bahrain also fails to prosecute many officials accused of torture. In March 2016, Bahrain's Second Criminal Court commuted the sentence of a police officer, who was accused of beating a prisoner, from two years to three months.¹¹³ At the same time, another court upheld an August 2014 verdict, which acquitted nine police officers, who were charged in May 2013 with assaulting, beating, and torturing thirteen prisoners.¹¹⁴

II. Freedoms of Opinion, Expression, and Association

The OHCHR and the Special Procedures most frequently call for Bahrain to respect and protect the freedoms of opinion, expression, and association for its citizens. In the past two years alone, they have highlighted human rights violations related to these freedoms on at least eight separate occasions. The Government of Bahrain routinely brings charges against activists related to their speech and actions. Nabeel Rajab was targeted due to tweets he published, Zainab al-Khawaja was arrested after tearing a photo of the king, and numerous others are targeted because of their religion or association with activists. The Special Procedures and the OHCHR take issue with the Government of Bahrain's treatment of these specific human rights defenders. The cases of Rajab and Khawaja have both merited at least two individual statements each from the Special Procedures, as well as over six mentions in other press releases and OHCHR statements in the last three years.

The most recent press release from the Special Procedures, on 16 August 2016, also expressed concern over Bahrain stripping the citizenship of Sheikh Isa Qassim, especially as he did not have an opportunity to defend himself.¹¹⁵ Following his citizenship revocation, a sit-in protest began outside of his home in Diraz.¹¹⁶ Bahrain has taken strict measures to stifle the freedoms of those involved in the protests. The government set up checkpoints to control the movement into and out of the town, and denied entry to many non-Diraz residents.¹¹⁷ Authorities also reportedly deliberately disrupted internet and mobile network service to Diraz, thereby inhibiting the free flow of information from Diraz to outside the city.

109 "Bahrain / Human rights: Government effectively cancels UN Special Rapporteur on torture's visit," UN Office of the High Commissioner, 24 April 2013, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13261&LangID=E>

110 Ibid.

111 "ADHRB at HRC: Extensive Use of Torture Documented in Bahrain," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 11 March 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/03/adhrb-hrc-2-4/>

112 "Independent and Impartial Investigation Needed into the Death and Alleged Torture of Detainee," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 1 August 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/08/10556/>

113 Tyler Pry, "Bahrain acquits security officers of torture, sentences Shia cleric for free speech," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 14 March 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/03/bahrain-acquits-security-officers-torture-sentences-shia-cleric-free-speech/>

114 Ibid.

115 "UN rights experts urge Bahrain to end the persecution of Shias," UN Office of the High Commissioner, 16 August 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20375&LangID=E>

116 "In response to government repression Bahrainis hold mass sit-in in Diraz," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 29 June 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/10196/>

117 "Round-the-clock sit-in continues in Diraz as Government of Bahrain stifles civil society," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 11 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/round-clock-sit-continues-diraz-government-bahrain-stifles-civil-society/>

A statement from the OHCHR on 19 July 2016 urges the Government of Bahrain “to review the decision to ban Al Wefaq and other organizations that have been suspended for peaceful exercise of their rights.”¹¹⁸ Bahraini courts dissolved Al-Wefaq, the largest political and opposition society in the country on 14 June 2016 on charges that it supported sectarianism and terrorism.¹¹⁹ The dissolving of the party is just the latest in a longstanding government campaign against the group. In May 2016, the Bahraini court of appeals more than doubled the sentence of Al-Wefaq’s Secretary-General, Sheikh Ali Salman, to nine years.¹²⁰ Also, in 2014, Bahraini officials ordered US Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Tom Malinowski to leave the country after meeting with Al-Wefaq leaders, as the meeting violated “diplomatic norms” and “normal interstate relations.”¹²¹

III. Religious Intolerance

Since 2014, at least four OHCHR and Special Procedures press releases were dedicated to the government’s discrimination and persecution of the Bahraini Shia community. On 24 April 2014, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief issued a press release urging Bahrain to stop harassing and persecuting members of the Shia community, specifically Sheikh Hussain Mirza Abdelbaqi Najati. Bahraini authorities stripped Sheikh Najati of his citizenship, rendering him stateless. Officials then ordered him into exile in Lebanon. The Special Rapporteur expressed concern over “what appears to be an act of religiously motivated discrimination which would seem to impose unjustified restrictions on Mr. Najati’s fundamental human rights, including his right to practice and profess peacefully his religious beliefs.”¹²² As Sheikh Najati has consistently refrained from engaging in politics, Bahraini officials targeted him for his religious beliefs.

The Government of Bahrain has not stopped its practice of citizenship revocation nor religious discrimination against Shia. Most recently, on 16 August 2016, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Religion or Belief, and the Situation of Human Rights Defenders issued a joint press release urging the Government of Bahrain to end the persecution of the country’s Shia. The government has revoked the citizenship of over 290 Shia, many of whom are human rights defenders, activists, or religious leaders. From June 2016 to August 2016, Bahraini authorities judicially harassed at least 56 Shia religious figures and clerics.¹²³ In July 2016, officials also charged some of these leaders for money laundering in relation to the Shia practice of *khums*, an annual payment made by Shia Muslims to Shia clerics in order for them to distribute it to those in need.¹²⁴ The latest Special Procedures statement clearly notes, “Shias are clearly being targeted on the basis of their religion.”¹²⁵

118 “Press briefing notes on Turkey, Israel and Bahrain,” UN Office of the High Commissioner, 19 July 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20284&LangID=E>

119 “NGOs Strongly Condemn Bahrain’s Government Closing Al-Wefaq,” Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 14 June 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/ngos-strongly-condemn-bahrains-government-suspending-al-wefaq/>

120 Alexander Kochenburger, “Shrinking Space for Civil Society in Bahrain: Authorities Close Al-Wefaq Political Society,” Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 22 June 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/shrinking-space-civil-society-bahrain-authorities-close-al-wefaq-political-society/>

121 Ibid.

122 “Bahrain should stop persecution of Shi’a Muslims and return its citizenship to their spiritual leader,” UN Office of the High Commissioner, 24 April 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14533&LangID=E>

123 “Bahraini Authorities Continue Campaign Against Sheikh Isa Qassim and Shia Religious Leaders,” Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 18 August 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/08/bahraini-authorities-continue-campaign-sheikh-isa-qassim-shia-religious-leaders/>

124 “Bahraini Authorities Continue Campaign Against Sheikh Isa Qassim and Shia Religious Leaders,” Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 18 August 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/08/bahraini-authorities-continue-campaign-sheikh-isa-qassim-shia-religious-leaders/>

125 “UN rights experts urge Bahrain to end the persecution of Shias,” UN Office of the High Commissioner, 16 August 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20375&LangID=E>

IV. Human Rights Defenders

Bahrain routinely targets human rights defenders in order to silence their activism. Since September 2014, the Special Procedures and the OHCHR have issued at least seven statements expressing concern over Bahrain's treatment of activists. Among the cases most concerning to the OHCHR are those of Maryam al-Khawaja, Zainab al-Khawaja, and Nabeel Rajab. The most recent press release from 16 August 2016 states that, "intensified wave of arrests, detentions, summons, interrogations and criminal charges brought against...human rights defenders and peaceful dissidents is having a chilling effect on fundamental human rights."¹²⁶ Bahraini authorities rearrested Nabeel Rajab on 13 June 2016 in connection with tweets he published criticizing the government.¹²⁷ In prison, officials continue to routinely deny him access to sanitary living conditions, medical care, and interaction with others.¹²⁸ Zainab and Maryam al-Khawaja are also frequently mentioned in OHCHR press statements. Both Zainab and Maryam were charged for their political activism. Bahraini authorities held Zainab and her infant son in prison after she ripped a photo of the king in public. In a statement from 18 March 2016, quotes a UN expert, "Ms. Zainab is detained purely for her critical views against government authorities," he said. "Such criticism is not only fully legitimate according to Bahrain's obligations under human rights law. It is absolutely essential to the free and public debate necessary for a vibrant civil society."¹²⁹

The government has also stifled the activism of other, less prominent activists. In June 2016, officials imposed travel bans on at least 10 human rights activists and family members of those the government had subjected to abuse.¹³⁰ This directly prevented them from being able to travel to the UN Human Rights Council session, where they planned to engage with the international community regarding the human rights violations in Bahrain.¹³¹ Bahrain continues to ignore OHCHR calls to respect the rights of human rights defenders and activists.

V. Right to Peaceful Assembly

At least two statements by the Special Procedures point to the Government of Bahrain's violations to its citizens' right to peace and peaceful assembly. Most recently, this was explicitly reiterated in a press release from 1 June 2016.¹³² In the press release, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression – endorsed by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders – maintains that the Bahraini government must respect the rights to peaceful assembly and expression by allowing nonviolent demonstrations and gatherings. During the ongoing peaceful sit-in protests in Diraz, Bahraini authorities have infringed on these rights by imposing checkpoints and cutting off internet and phone service.¹³³ These barriers to movement impacted

126 Ibid.

127 "Updates: Arrest and Detention of BCHR's President Nabeel Rajab," Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 15 August 2016, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/updates-arrest-and-detention-bchrs-president-nabeel-rajab>

128 Ibid.

129 "UN expert calls on Bahrain to release woman rights defender and stop persecuting defenders," UN Office of the High Commissioner, 18 March 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=18471&LangID=E>

130 "Bahrain Authorities Prevent Civil Society Members and Human Rights Defenders from Participating in UN HRC 32," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 13 June 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/bahrain-authorities-prevent-civil-society-members-human-rights-defenders-participating-un-hrc-32/>

131 Ibid.

132 "Bahrain: UN Expert Condemns the Sentencing of Opposition Leader Sheikh Ali al-Salman," UN Office of the High Commissioner, 1 June 2016, [http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/7892B5A76D49C762C1257FC5004BADE4?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/7892B5A76D49C762C1257FC5004BADE4?OpenDocument)

133 "Diraz: A Community Under Siege," Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 13 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/10390/>

the local economy, and local business owners reported that customers and sales were down by as much as 90% in shops and supermarkets, as non-Diraz residents could no longer frequent them.¹³⁴ Simultaneously, security forces have prevented religious figures conducting services in the area, and have begun arresting and charging participants with “illegal gathering.”¹³⁵ The government’s actions directly impede its citizens’ right to peaceful assembly.

Conclusion

Together, the UN Secretary-General and the OHCHR/Special Procedures have issued dozens of statements and press releases calling attention to systematic human rights violations in Bahrain. Since 2011, they have reiterated points raised by both the HRC joint statements and the EP resolutions, and they have called on the Bahraini government to institute sweeping reforms to curb arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearance, and other forms of abuse and reprisal. Simultaneously, it has urged the authorities to better protect basic human rights, including those to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of belief. At the 32nd session of the HRC, the High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that that repression “will not eliminate people’s grievances [in Bahrain], it will increase them.”¹³⁶ Nevertheless, the government has continued to disregard these international experts as well, choosing instead to intensify its campaign against dissent.

134 Ibid.

135 “Bahraini Authorities Continue Campaign Against Sheikh Isa Qassim and Shia Religious Leaders,” Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 18 August 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/08/bahraini-authorities-continue-campaign-sheikh-isa-qassim-shia-religious-leaders/>

136 “Bahrain detains rights activist as UN official criticises repression,” The Guardian, 13 June 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/13/bahrain-detains-rights-activist-un-official-criticises-repression>



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