

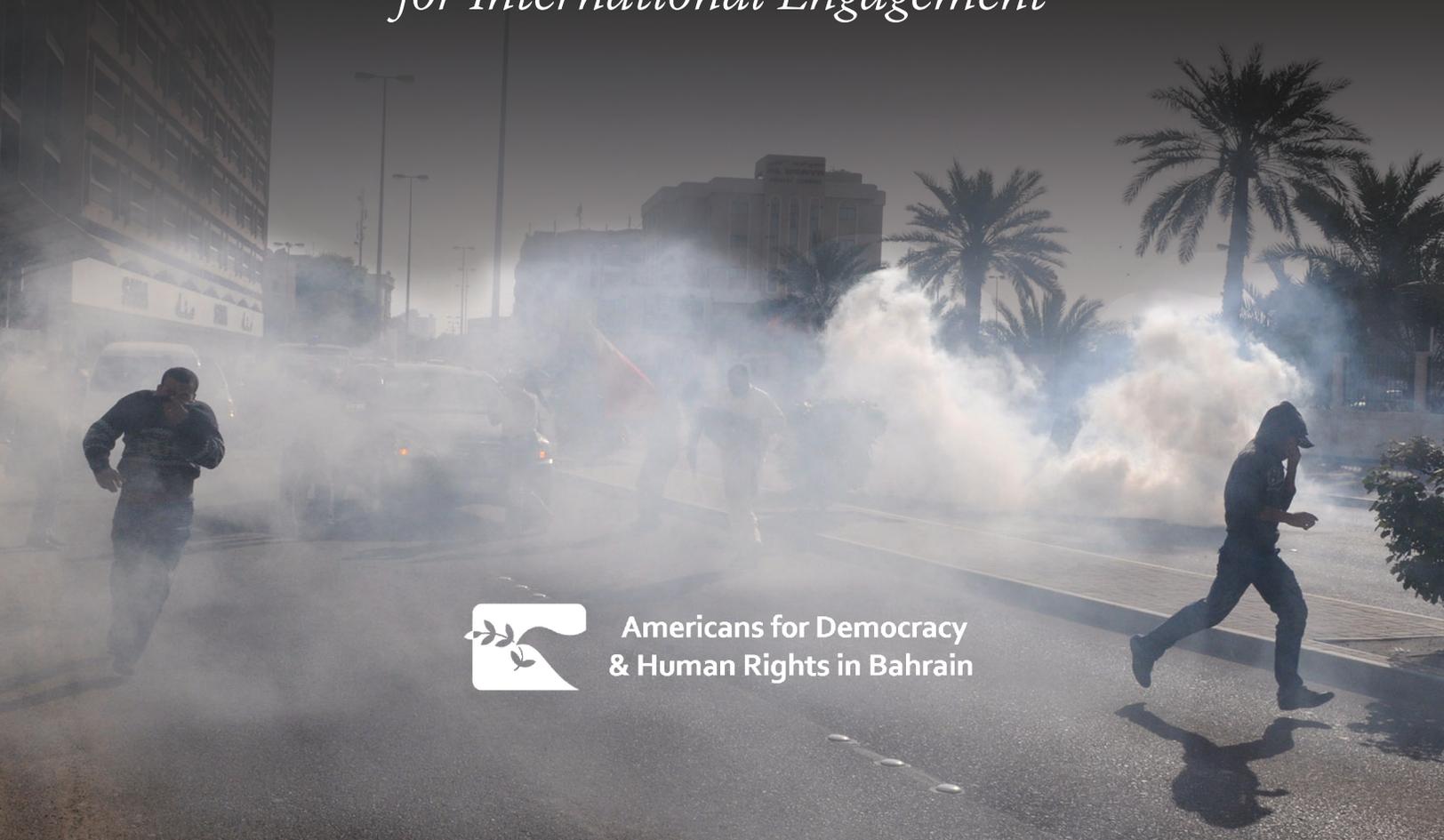


Crushing Civil Society

*Bahraini Government Reprisals
for International Engagement*



Americans for Democracy
& Human Rights in Bahrain



Crushing Civil Society

*Bahraini Government Reprisals
for International Engagement*

June 2017

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain

©2017, Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain. All rights reserved.

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization based in Washington, D.C. that fosters awareness of and support for democracy and human rights in Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf.

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
1001 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 205
Washington, D.C. 20036 USA
(202) 621-6141

www.adhrb.org

Design and layout by Jennifer King

Contents

Introduction	6
I. Domestic Restrictions on Civil Society Space	7
II. Reprisals and Interference in International Engagement	15
III. Conclusion and Recommendations	21



CRUSHING CIVIL SOCIETY

BAHRAINI GOVERNMENT REPRISALS FOR
INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT
2012-2017

MAY 2012

SECOND UPR CYCLE

As civil society actors returned from the UPR session in Geneva, Bahraini authorities subject them to a campaign of harassment and intimidation.

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2012

HRC21

Bahraini authorities arrest BYSHR president Mohammed al-Maskati and then BCHR vice president Sayed Yousif Almuhafdah after they return from HRC21. Just prior to al-Maskati's arrest, he was defamed in pro-government media for his work at the Council session.

OCTOBER 2014

NABEEL RAJAB'S ADVOCACY TOUR

After an extended trip to Europe to engage with the international human rights community, BCHR president Nabeel Rajab is arrested for "insulting official institutions."

MARCH 2015

HRC28

The Bahraini government delegation threatens visiting members of civil society, including ADHRB executive director Husain Abdulla.

AUGUST 2015

OHCHR CONFERENCE

Interfaith activist Sheikh Maytham al-Salman is charged with "inciting hatred against the government" and placed on a travel ban after attending an OHCHR conference on hate speech.

SPRING 2016

PUNITIVE FUNDING CUTS

Bahraini authorities cut funding to civil society organizations like the Bahrain Women's Union. The group claims they are being punished for submitting a CEDAW shadow report to the UN in 2014.





CRUSHING CIVIL SOCIETY

BAHRAINI GOVERNMENT REPRISALS FOR
INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT
2012-2017

JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2016

HRC32-33

The government bans nearly 30 activists from traveling to the Council sessions and re-arrests Nabeel Rajab on charges related to tweets and interviews.

MARCH 2017

HRC34

In a troubling escalation, the authorities target the family members of activists while they are participating in the Council session. Bahraini forces arrest and torture relatives of BIRD advocacy director Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, and they harass activist Ebtisam al-Saegh's sister.

MAY 2017

THIRD UPR CYCLE

Ahead of the UPR session and pre-session events, the government imposes travel bans on at least 32 civil society actors, subjecting many to additional forms of judicial harassment. As a result, the number of independent activists and stakeholders able to leave Bahrain to attend the UPR falls from 47 during the second cycle to just two.

MAY 2017

AHEAD OF HRC35

Between the third-cycle UPR session and HRC35, vehicles belonging to a number of civil society actors are found burning under suspicious circumstances. In the case of Ebtisam al-Saegh, the car is set ablaze just days after she was defamed and described as a criminal in a pro-government newspaper.

MAY 2017

ROYAL WINDSOR HORSE SHOW

Bahraini authorities harass the families of exiled activists as the latter protest the king's visit to the UK to attend the Royal Windsor Horse Show. Officials force some of family members to call their exiled relatives and tell them that, if they do not stop protesting and apologize to the king, they will not be released.



Introduction

The Government of Bahrain imposes significant restrictions on the formation of independent civil society organizations (CSOs) and continues to undermine the free operation of these groups. Consistently, over more than a decade, the government has promulgated legislation designed to limit the ability of CSOs to maintain active membership, effectively organize, and continue to function independently of the state. Bahraini authorities have also specifically targeted human rights defenders and members of human rights groups for judicial harassment and other forms of reprisal.

In recent years, the authorities have particularly sought to prevent CSO engagement with the United Nations (UN) and to sever the connection between Bahraini civil society and the international human rights community. As Bahrain's jails overflow with hundreds of political figures, journalists, religious leaders, and human rights activists, the government has gradually imprisoned the remainder within the confines of the country itself - holding them captive at the omnipresent threat of prosecution, torture, or worse. Moreover, as the authorities have eroded the space for domestic organizing or peaceful political activity, they have simultaneously attacked activist networks beyond the kingdom's borders – revoking the citizenship of exiled human rights defenders, hacking their personal information, and targeting their family members that remain in Bahrain. The government has consistently used a combination of such methods to not only inhibit Bahraini civil society engagement with international institutions like those of the UN, but also to undermine the efficacy of these same bodies.

All told, the Government of Bahrain continues to demonstrate that its rhetorical commitment to UN human rights mechanisms is in bad faith. Though it is welcome news that the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been invited to visit Bahrain,¹ history suggests this will be another superficial attempt to save face. The government has not permitted a single UN Special Procedures mandate holder to enter the country since 2006, and – perhaps in foreshadowing of what will come of the High Commissioner's visit – it so repeatedly postponed the Special Rapporteur on Torture's scheduled visit as to effectively cancel it, prompting a public rebuke from the rapporteur himself.²

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)'s new report, *Crushing Civil Society: Bahraini Government Reprisals for International Engagement*, shows how the authorities have worked to dismantle independent civil society and undermine substantive cooperation with the international human rights community. Mirroring the government's two-pronged approach, it begins by analyzing the current set of restrictions on civil and political society space within the country, before examining the authorities' concerted effort to close all avenues for civil society engagement abroad. Specifically, the report highlights the growing trend of government reprisals – travel bans, incarceration, threats – against individual activists and their families since the violent suppression of Bahrain's pro-democracy protest movement in 2011.

Recent political developments in the country suggest that Bahrain is rapidly becoming an outright military or police state. With the right to free expression or association all but prohibited at home, Bahraini civil society often has nowhere to turn but the UN and the international community. This system cannot afford to stand by as the Bahraini government flouts its authority – even questioning its legitimacy³ – and attacks the global civil society networks that make it possible.

I. Domestic Restrictions on Civil Society Space

The Government of Bahrain has instituted a series of extensive restrictions on the rights to free expression, assembly, and association, many of which heavily circumscribe civil society space and undermine the activity of CSOs. Bahraini authorities consistently utilize the country's Law of Associations and the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (MLSD)'s CSO registration process as a means of restricting, monitoring, or outright dissolving human rights organizations and CSOs they deem critical of the government.

Article 27 of Bahrain's constitution technically guarantees the right to freedom of association by "peaceful means...provided that the fundamentals of the religion and public order are not infringed."⁴ However, the 1989 Law of Associations (also referred to as Legislative Decree No. 21 of 1989 on private social and cultural associations and clubs, private bodies working in the youth and sports sectors and private institutions) places CSOs under significant restrictions enforced by the MLSD. All CSOs are required to register with the MLSD and they are prohibited from engaging in any activity interpreted to be political, as this activity is regulated by the separate Law of Political Societies.⁵ If the MLSD does not respond within 60 days, the registration request is automatically denied under Article 9 of the Law of Associations. CSOs that are denied registration must successfully appeal the decision in court to reverse the order. Article 89 of the Law of Associations imposes a fine of BD1000 (US\$2640) and/or a year of imprisonment for establishing and operating an unregistered organization or disseminating information on behalf of an unlicensed organization. In addition to these constraints, Article 163 of the Bahraini Penal Code effectively criminalizes membership in any unlicensed national or foreign organization.⁶ Article 50 allows the authorities to dissolve CSOs if they are deemed "unable to achieve the objectives [they were] established for...or if they violate the association law, public order and norms."⁷

If a CSO successfully registers with the MLSD, it becomes subject to regular official inspections, including Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs (MOJ) investigations into the organization's funding sources.⁸ Articles 20 and 21 of the Law of Associations require CSOs obtain prior approval from the government before receiving foreign funding and empower the authorities to regulate all aspects of such organizations' financial affairs.⁹ Political societies are subject to similar regulations under the Law of Political Societies. The government limits the ability of CSOs to fundraise, accept local donations, form unions and coordinate, or join regional and international organizations.¹⁰ Violations of these restrictions can lead to the imprisonment of a CSO's membership for six months or more. In addition to imposing constraints on foreign funding, the authorities have also reportedly cut public funding to CSOs in retaliation for work related to human rights and discrimination (see Section II below).

Trade unionists and labor activists also face severe obstacles in Bahrain. According to Article 10 of Law 33/2002, also known as the Workers and Trade Union Law, workers of any particular occupation or sector have the right to form a trade union.¹¹ Immediately after that law was passed, however, Bahraini authorities claimed that its provisions did not apply to public sector workers and prevented them from joining or forming unions.¹² The Post Office Workers, Water and Electricity Workers, Public Works Workers, Healthcare Workers, Social Insurance Workers, and Retirement Fund Workers groups were all repeatedly denied registration as official unions. In response, the General Federation of Bahrain's Trade Unions (GFBTU) issued a complaint to the ILO in 2005 concerning the government's continued refusal to register trade unions in the public

sector.¹³ Since 2006, the government has claimed that the National Assembly was considering an amendment to the Workers and Trade Union Law that would allow public workers to form unions, but any such amendment has yet to be enacted.¹⁴ Furthermore, since 2012 the government has moved to hamstringing the GFBTU through legislation that, for example, hinders its ability to represent workers at certain national and international fora. The GFBTU's position has been further undermined by the emergence of a separate trade federation that has strong links to the government.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the MLSD continues to be criticized for its excessively slow registration of new unions and trade groups.

A. Targeted Suppression of CSOs

The Bahraini authorities have wielded this restrictive framework against dozens of CSOs. In September 2004, the MLSD ordered the closure of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), one of the country's leading human rights organizations, after its cofounder, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, delivered a speech on economic rights that was critical of the prime minister.¹⁶ The authorities arrested al-Khawaja on charges of spreading "false or malicious news" and temporarily closed the venue that had hosted the speech, known as the Uruba Club¹⁷ – a decades-old "literary-social" association in Bahrain.¹⁸ Later, in a separate case stemming from his activism during the the 2011 pro-democracy protests, a military court sentenced al-Khawaja to life in prison. At time of writing, al-Khawaja remains incarcerated at Bahrain's Jau Prison where his health has deteriorated due to unhygienic living conditions and arbitrary deprivation of medical care.¹⁹ BCHR's current president, Nabeel Rajab, has been repeatedly arrested over accusations stemming from his human rights work and his prominent role in Bahraini civil society. Authorities most recently arrested Rajab in June 2016 and have since held him in pre-trial detention on charges related to tweets, retweets, and newspaper editorials. He faces at least 18 years in prison.²⁰



Abdulhadi al-Khawaja (left) and Nabeel Rajab (right)

BCHR has continued to operate despite the official dissolution order, and the government has regularly threatened to target its members for further reprisal if they continue their activities. Many BCHR members, in addition to al-Khawaja and Rajab, have since faced arrest, travel ban, and other forms of judicial harassment (see Section II)

In 2005, the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR) applied for registration with the MLSD, but was rejected.²¹ The government later fined BYSHR for operating as an unlicensed organization and, in 2012, arrested its cofounder, Mohammed al-Maskati, on charges of “illegal gathering” stemming from his alleged participation in a peaceful demonstration.²² Although Maskati was released after interrogation, these charges were only dropped in February 2016 (see Section II).²³ Bahraini authorities have also repeatedly arrested and harassed BYSHR board member Naji Fateel, who is currently serving two separate 15-year prison sentences on charges of establishing “a group for the purpose of disabling the constitution” and allegedly participating in a 2015 riot at Jau Prison, respectively.²⁴ Fateel says that he did not participate in the unrest, but that the authorities targeted him for torture and abuse during the collective punishment of the inmate population that ensued.²⁵



Mohammed al-Maskati

In 2010, the government dismissed the board of the Bahrain Human Rights Society, replacing it with a temporary manager appointed by the authorities. That same year, it effectively dissolved the Bahrain Nursing Society and seized its headquarters after the group held a solidarity event for a member who was arrested after treating an injured protester. The authorities had previously dismissed the Bahrain Nursing Society’s board as well.²⁶

Since the emergence of the 2011 pro-democracy movement, the Bahraini government has intensified its efforts to impede the work of CSOs. In just 2011, the authorities formally dissolved the Bahrain Teacher’s Association and imprisoned several of its members; took control of the Bahrain Medical Society by imposing a pro-government board; and declared the legally elected board of the Bahrain Lawyers Society null and void, reinstating the previous board.²⁷ The authorities additionally pressured the administrative bodies of the Authors and Writers Family Society and the Bahrain Medical Society to resign. Consequently, the MLSD imposed internal regulations and changes to the structure of both groups’ general assemblies to enhance the government’s control over their operations.²⁸

More recently, on 25 April 2016, the Ministry of Culture and Antiquities issued an order to disband the Bahrain Photographic Society, alleging that its members had engaged in “activities contrary to the law and public order.”²⁹ The government had previously targeted the organization in 2011 as well, arresting its president, Mohammed Al-Sheikh.³⁰ On 14 June 2016, the MLSD closed two of the only remaining Shia CSOs, the Al-Risala Islamic Society and the Islamic Enlightenment Society (Al-Tawiyah) on accusations of “illegal fundraising” related to the religious practice of *khums*.³¹ Security forces arrested the head of Al-Risala Islamic Society, Mahmood al-Arab, on the same day.³² On 16 June, the authorities interrogated nine Shia clerics – including Sayed Majeed al-Misha’al, Sheikh Hussain al-Mahroos, Sheikh Hasan al-Maleki, Sheikh Ebrahim al-Ansari, Sayed Hashim al-Bahrani, and Sheikh Abdulmuhsen Attya al-Jamri – in connection with Al-Risala, Al-Tawiyah, and/or the “illegal collection of money.”³³ The government has twice summoned the head of Al-Tawiyah,³⁴ Sheikh Baqer al-Hawaj, and reportedly banned him from traveling. The organization’s website is also now blocked in Bahrain.³⁵ In addition to an infringement on the right to of association, as well as international religious and cultural rights, the government’s

Outlawing the Opposition: Closing Political Space in Bahrain

The Government of Bahrain has imposed similar limitations on political association under the Law of Political Societies, forcing many groups underground and subjecting formal organizations to arbitrary suspensions, asset seizures, and dissolution. During the height of the 2011 protest movement and its aftermath, the government subjected political societies to particularly extreme reprisal, including temporarily closing Wa'ad and imprisoning its Secretary-General Ebrahim Sharif; threatening Al-Wefaq with legal action and arresting many of its members; and disbanding the Islamic Action Society (Amal), detaining hundreds of its members, and incarcerating its leadership, including Sheikh Mohammed Ali al-Mahfood.¹ Some political figures, like Wa'ad's Munira Fakhro, also faced attacks by pro-government gangs,² and Wa'ad's headquarters was twice burnt down.³



Fadhel Abbas (left) and Sheikh Ali Salman (right)

Since the November 2014 elections for the lower house of Bahrain's National Assembly, the government has taken steps to eliminate the opposition entirely. During the run-up to those elections, the MOJ requested that the courts suspend Al-Wefaq and Wa'ad for three months; the order against Wa'ad was later rescinded, but both societies ultimately boycotted the elections, citing widespread government interference.⁴ Earlier that year, in September 2014, the security forces detained and tortured Khalil al-Halwachi, a scholar and activist, over his former membership in the now-dissolved Amal society.⁵ After more than two years of pre-trial detention, al-Halwachi was sentenced to 10 years in prison on unsubstantiated charges of illegally possessing weapons.⁶ In December 2014, authorities arrested and later sentenced Al-Wefaq's Secretary-General Sheikh Ali Salman to four years in



Khalil al-Halwachi

- 1 Ministry of Human Rights Continues Attempts to Take Over Civil Society Organizations and Cancel Bahrain Bar Society Elections," BCHR, 18 December 2011, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/4910>; and Sam Jones, "Prosecuting politics: the judicial assault on Bahrain's opposition, 18 December 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/sam-jones/prosecuting-politics-judicial-assault-on-bahrain-s-opposition>
- 2 Toby Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring that Wasn't*, Stanford University: 2013, <http://www.sup.org/books/title?id=23053>
- 3 "Pro-govt Bahrain marchers graffiti Waad headquarters," Arabian Business, 11 December 2011, <http://m.arabianbusiness.com/pro-govt-bahrain-marchers-graffiti-waad-headquarters-434459.html>
- 4 Sam Jones, "Prosecuting politics: the judicial assault on Bahrain's opposition, 18 December 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/sam-jones/prosecuting-politics-judicial-assault-on-bahrain-s-opposition>
- 5 "Bahrain: Justice denied for two years as Khalil Al-Halwachi is imprisoned without a verdict," BCHR, 29 August 2016, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/8100>
- 6 "Bahraini authorities sentence scholar and activist Khalil al-Halwachi to 10 years in prison," ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 2 March 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/03/bahraini-authorities-sentence-scholar-activist-khalil-al-halwachi-10-years-prison/>

prison,⁷ and in July 2016 they dissolved Al-Wefaq entirely.⁸ Fadhel Abbas, the leader of the leftist Al-Wahdawi society, was arrested for tweets criticizing the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen in March 2015, and a court later sentenced him to three years in prison on appeal.⁹ Similarly, the government rearrested Ebrahim Sharif and sentenced him to another year in prison in 2015 on charges related to



Al-Wefaq headquarters following government seizure in 2016

the contents of a political speech he delivered; though he completed the term in summer 2016, Bahraini authorities have continued to judicially harass him for exercising his right to free expression.¹⁰ In March 2017, the MOJ launched legal proceedings to dissolve Wa'ad over unfounded allegations of “incitement of acts of terrorism and promoting violent and forceful overthrow of the political regime.”¹¹ The case is ongoing.

Bahraini authorities have continued to arrest and harass other members of these opposition groups, as well as unlicensed political organizations, and have also prevented them from engaging the international community.¹² It is estimated that between 3,500 and 4,000 political prisoners are currently incarcerated in Bahrain.¹³

7 “Bahrain: Further Information: Opposition Leader’s Sentence Reduced Again: Sheikh Ali Salman,” Amnesty International, 13 April 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/6068/2017/en/>

8 “Bahrain’s High Court of Appeals Upholds Dissolution of Al-Wefaq,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 22 September 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/09/bahrain-high-court-appeals-upholds-dissolution-al-wefaq/>

9 “Bahraini Opposition Activist Fadhel Abbas Sentenced to Three Years in Prison on Appeal,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 27 October 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/10/bahraini-opposition-activist-fadhel-abbas-sentenced-three-years-prison-appeal/>

10 “Bahrain: Political Opposition Leader Ebrahim Sharif Charged With ‘Inciting Hatred,’” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 20 March 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/03/12050/>; “Bahrain: Widespread Reprisals against Activists Ahead of UPR,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 26 April 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/04/bahrain-widespread-reprisals-activists-ahead-upr/>

11 “Bahraini government moves to dissolve leading secular, leftist opposition society Wa’ad,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 6 March 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/03/bahraini-government-moves-dissolve-leading-secular-leftist-opposition-society-waad/>

12 “Bahrain’s UPR National Report: A Response with Selected Assessments – Part I,” ADHRB, 10 April 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/04/bahrain-upr-national-report-response-assessment/>

13 “Bahrain Continues Harassment and Imprisonment of Human Rights Defenders,” Freedom House, 12 August 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/article/bahrain-continues-harassment-and-imprisonment-human-rights-defenders>

criminalization of traditional practices like *khums* may constitute a violation of Bahrain's 1956 law on collecting donations as well as Article 22 of the constitution, which states that "freedom of conscience is absolute...[and] the State shall guarantee the inviolability of places of worship and the freedom to perform religious rights and to hold religious processions and meetings in accordance with the customs observed in the country."³⁶

Bahraini authorities further escalated their reprisals against individual civil society actors in 2016 and 2017. Throughout the last 18 months, the government has imposed intermittent – and sometimes secret or de facto – travel bans on dozens of activists and human rights defenders, including Essa Al-Ghayeb; Ebtisam Al-Saegh; Ebrahim Demistani; journalist Nazeeha Saeed;³⁷ human rights lawyer Mohammed Al-Tajer;³⁸ journalist Ahmed Radhi; interfaith leader Sheikh Maytham al-Salman; neurosurgeon Dr. Taha al-Derazi;³⁹ Director General of the National Centre for Studies and former president of the Bahrain Transparency Society Abdulnabi al-Ekry; and BCHR's Nedal al-Salman, Enas Oun, Hussain Radhi, and Ahmed Saffar.⁴⁰ In addition to violating their freedom of movement, the government specifically prevented many such activists from traveling to Geneva, Switzerland to engage with the UN HRC (see Section II).⁴¹ Activists estimate that the government has imposed travel bans on more than 100 people in relation to their civil society engagement or on the suspicion they hold dissident views.⁴²



Ebrahim Demistani

The authorities have judicially harassed many of these same civil society actors over accusations of "illegal assembly" or spreading "false news," typically related to their activism or civil society work. In November 2016, security forces cited such charges to interrogate Zeinab al-Khamis, a member of the Bahrain Society for Human Rights; Jalila al-Salman, a member of the Bahrain Teachers Association; Rula al-Saffar, a prominent doctor and advocate for medical neutrality; Nader Abdel-Imam, an activist and head of the Bahraini Organization for Anti-Discrimination; Ebtisam al-Saegh; Mohamed al-Tajer; Ebrahim Demistani; Abdulnabi al-Ekry; and the four BCHR members listed above.⁴³ The

authorities formally charged BCHR's Hussain Radhi with "inciting hatred against the regime, threatening civil peace and publishing false news" due to tweets and retweets he had posted online.⁴⁴ Similarly, Sheikh Maytham al-Salman and Dr. Taha al-Derazi were detained and charged with "illegal gathering" in August 2016, and in July 2016 the authorities charged Nazeeha Saeed with "practicing journalism without prior official permission."⁴⁵

Legal restrictions and the risk of reprisal, coupled with the basic difficulty of successfully registering with the MLSA, have also forced many groups to either continue their work unofficially or to establish informal networks, including organizations of writers, journalists, medical doctors, and nurses.⁴⁶ These unlicensed groups are at a particularly high risk of judicial harassment and criminal sanction.

Nevertheless, the government reports that the MLSA has created a "National NGO Support Centre" to facilitate the formation of CSOs, and it claims their numbers have steadily grown from

Beyond Bahrain's Borders: How the Government Targets Diaspora Activists

The government's reprisal campaign has forced many civil society actors into exile, where they often continue to face other forms of retaliation for their work. For example, Maryam al-Khawaja and Zainab



Zainab (left) and Maryam (right) al-Khawaja

al-Khawaja, both of whom are daughters of imprisoned human rights defender Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, have fled Bahrain for Denmark after being repeatedly arrested and harassed by the Bahraini government. Maryam left the country in 2014 after the government launched criminal proceedings in reprisal for her activism (see Section II). In March 2016, the authorities arrested Zainab along with her months-old son to serve a total of three years and one month in prison over charges stemming from her human rights work and peaceful expression of dissent.¹

Though she was released in May 2016, Zainab received threats that she would be imminently re-arrested and left the country to join her sister in Denmark.² They continue to face online harassment,³ the risk of government surveillance and cyberattacks, and other forms of reprisal.⁴

The government has additionally expanded its authority to arbitrarily strip individuals of their citizenship, a power it has used not only to punish and even deport citizens living in Bahrain, but also to attack civil society actors within the diaspora community. The authorities have revoked the citizenship of both Husain Abdulla, ADHRB's Executive Director, and Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, BIRD's Director of Advocacy, for example. Since 2012, the government has arbitrarily deprived more than 400 people of citizenship, the vast majority of which are civil society actors and/or members of the country's marginalized Shia community. Many are rendered stateless.⁵

Exiled activists also face smear campaigns and threats in both traditional and social media. In February 2017, for example, an Instagram account believed to belong to a Bahraini Ministry of Interior officer threatened Sayed Yousif al-Muhafdah, the former Vice President of BCHR who currently lives in exile in Germany, warning him that if he continues his activism abroad his family remaining in Bahrain will be targeted.⁶ The government has made similar threats against Husain Abdulla and Sayed Ahmed Alawdaei, and in March 2017 it arrested and tortured members of Alwadaei's family in retaliation for his work (see Section II below).

1 "NGOs call for the release of activist Zainab al-Khawaja," ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, ECDHR, and JHRO, 14 March 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/03/ngos-call-release-activist-zainab-al-khawaja/>

2 Kareem Fahim, "Freed From Prison, Zainab al-Khawaja Flees Bahrain," *The New York Times*, 11 June 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/12/world/middleeast/freed-from-prison-zainab-al-khawaja-flees-bahrain.html>

3 "Hugs of solidarity for Maryam," Association for Women in Development (AWID), 14 October 2016, <https://www.awid.org/get-involved/hugs-solidarity-maryam>

4 Maryam al-Khawaja, "Survivor's guilt and loneliness: the life of an activist in exile," *The Guardian*, 10 December 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/dec/10/life-activist-exile-bahrain-protest>

5 *Bahrain's Third Cycle UPR: A Record of Repression*, ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD, 2017, http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017.2.28_Web-Version_ADHRB_BCHR_BIRD_Bahrain-3rd-Cycle-UPR-Assessment.pdf

6 Twitter account of Sayed Yousif Almuhafdah, Twitter, @SAIDYOUSIF, 15 February 2017, <https://twitter.com/SAIDYOUSIF/status/831968298241777664>

376 in 2004 to 607 in 2016.⁴⁷ It specifically claims that between 2013 and 2016, “four new rights associations have been established, in addition to the nine already in existence” and that all of these “associations concerned with human rights” took part in the country’s consultation process ahead of the May 2017 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle.

However, it remains extremely unclear what groups are included in these figures, and the numbers may be skewed by government-organized NGOs (GONGOs). In recent years, the government has funded and/or sponsored a range of civil society actors that do not face the same restrictions as independent CSOs. The authorities typically do not apply certain aspects of the Law of Associations or MLSD regulations to GONGOs, and many of these organizations contain government officials.⁴⁸ This unequal application of legislative restrictions is mirrored for political societies, as authorities have seemingly declined to enforce prohibitions on foreign funding for pro-government groups, like al-Asala, for example, which reportedly receives financial support from Saudi Arabia.⁴⁹

The MLSD has reportedly prepared a draft Law to reform the Law on Associations that was referred to the National Assembly on 7 January 2013. However, the draft law contains additional restrictions that would substantially enhance MLSD control over CSOs, intensify limitations on the formation and registration of new groups, and significantly impede cooperation and collaboration between different organizations and their members.⁵⁰ It has yet to be approved. The MLSD has also reportedly established a “Community Social Action Fund” of more than BD 300,000 (\$796,000) to “provide support to civil society organizations and institutions” for projects “assessed by experts.” According to a 2017 government report, the majority of the fund is designated for projects that fall under the ambiguous category of “national kinship,” and the most recent disbursement figure indicates that 66 CSOs received funding in 2014.⁵¹ It is unclear which organizations were provided with funding and for what purposes, or if the fund has continued to operate beyond 2014. Conversely, however, the government has recently revoked public funding from several CSOs after engaging with UN treaty bodies (see Section II below).

II. Reprisals and Interference in International Engagement

Bahraini authorities have increasingly targeted civil society actors who engage with the UN system and the international community, often even pre-emptively targeting groups and individuals suspected of intending to work with international human rights mechanisms.

In May 2012, the government harassed Bahraini human rights defenders who provided information to the UN Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) ahead of the country's second-cycle review. The Ministry of Interior reportedly threatened activists returning from Geneva with interrogation over allegations that they slandered Bahrain. Many individuals who attended the UPR session or were believed to have engaged in the UPR process endured a public smear campaign.

Later that year, in October 2012, the authorities arrested BYSHR president Mohamed al-Maskati weeks after he participated in the 21st session of the HRC. Before he was arrested, al-Maskati was defamed in pro-government media and subjected to anonymous threats that cited his work at the HRC in Geneva.⁵² Though he was ultimately released, the authorities charged al-Maskati with “rioting and participating in an illegal gathering” over a peaceful demonstration he had recently attended in Bahrain. BCHR and the Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR) stated in 2013 that it was believed al-Maskati had “been targeted solely for his cooperation with the UN system and in particular his role in documenting and reporting the continued human rights violations.”⁵³ Soon after, the authorities also arrested Sayed Yousif al-Muhafdah,



Nabeel Rajab

then vice president of BCHR, on charges of “spreading false news with the intention of causing damage to state security” for posting information about injured protesters on social media. Al-Muhafdah had also recently returned from HRC21 and it is believed his prosecution was meant as reprisal for his engagement with the Council.⁵⁴ He was ultimately acquitted in 2013 but, after facing continued harassment, left Bahrain and sought asylum in Germany.⁵

In September 2014, human rights defender and BCHR president Nabeel Rajab traveled across Europe on an extended human rights advocacy tour. During this time, Rajab met with European foreign ministries and engaged the European Parliament in Brussels. He also attended the 27th HRC session, which represented only his second appearance at the Council since he completed a two-year prison sentence stemming from his earlier activism.⁵⁶ Less than 24 hours⁵⁷ after he returned to Bahrain, authorities arrested Rajab and charged him with “publicly insulting official institutions” under Article 216 of the Penal Code.⁵⁸ Though he was ultimately convicted over a tweet in which he discussed defections from the Bahraini security forces to join ISIS,⁵⁹ many observers, including multiple UN Special Procedures mandate holders, considered the prosecution an act of reprisal for Rajab's cooperation with the UN and its human rights mechanisms. Nearly 60 international CSOs,⁶⁰ as well as 103 members of the European Parliament⁶¹ and 21 members of the United Kingdom's parliament,⁶² called for Rajab to be acquitted. Additionally, the United States, Norway, France and the UN⁶³ all made public statements supporting Rajab and calling on Bahrain to respect freedom of expression.

During the same period of time, Bahraini authorities targeted Maryam al-Khawaja, a human rights defender and Special Advisor for GCHR who is also the daughter of BCHR's Abdulhadi al-Khawaja (see Section I.A). In August 2014, security forces detained Maryam al-Khawaja on unsubstantiated charges of “assaulting two policewomen” and “insulting the king” related to her activism.⁶⁴ Following her release on bail in September and the lifting of her travel ban in October, she left Bahrain for Denmark, where she also holds citizenship. The court convicted her in absentia on 1 December 2014 and sentenced her to one year in prison. The Special Rapporteurs on free expression, assembly and association, and human rights defenders, as well as the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, issued a joint communication to the Government of Bahrain conveying serious concern that the prosecution of Maryam al-Khawaja “might be an act of reprisal due to her cooperation with the United Nations and its human rights mechanisms.”⁶⁵

The frequency of such reprisals has escalated over the last three years. In March 2015, during a side event organized by ADHRB at the 28th session of the HRC, then Chairman of the Bahraini parliament's Human Rights Committee Khalid Abdulaziz Alshaer publicly threatened to use his influence over the interior ministry to bring charges against Bahraini human rights defender Abdulnabi al-Ekri, who was present at the event. While UN security personnel eventually removed him from the scene, Alshaer later accosted ADHRB's Executive Director, Husain Abdulla, and threatened members of Abdulla's family in Bahrain if he continued his human rights work.⁶⁶ These incidents were documented by both the Presidency of the HRC and the Special Rapporteur on the subject of human rights defenders. Alshaer went on to be appointed to Bahrain's National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR) and he currently serves as a commissioner and member of the Committee on Civil and Political Rights.⁶⁷



Sheikh Maytham al-Salman

In August 2015, Bahraini authorities arrested interfaith activist and human rights defender Sheikh Maytham al-Salman as he returned from Tunisia after attending an OHCHR-organized conference on hate speech.⁶⁸ Sheikh al-Salman is a member of the Mashreq-Maghreb Coalition to Counter Hatred, headquartered in Tunisia, and he met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights during his visit there. The Bahraini government charged Sheikh al-Salman with “inciting hatred against the system of government” and spreading “false news” over tweets he allegedly posted, and placed him under a travel ban. He had been similarly targeted in March 2011 after he returned from a trip to Germany.⁶⁹

In January 2016, the authorities again charged Sheikh al-Salman with inciting hatred against the government and “expressing views on an ongoing trial,” this time imposing a *de facto* travel ban on the interfaith leader by refusing to issue him a new passport after the original was “lost in mysterious circumstances.”⁷⁰ In March and August of that year, the authorities issued further charges against Sheikh al-Salman: “defaming religious symbols”⁷¹ and “illegal gathering,” respectively. The former charges stemmed from a sermon he had delivered,⁷² while the latter pertained to his alleged participation in a peaceful demonstration in the village of Diraz.⁷³

Also during the first several months of 2016, the Government of Bahrain cut funding to members of the Bahrain Women's Union (BWU), an umbrella organization of 13 women's rights groups.⁷⁴ The

A Family in Exile: Hussain Jawad and Asma Darwish

Bahraini authorities have increasingly retaliated against entire families for their members' activism. Security forces repeatedly targeted Hussain Jawad and Asma Darwish, for example, two Bahraini human rights defenders who happen to be married. Jawad is also the son of Mohammed Hassan Jawad Parweez, a member of the Bahrain 13 who is currently serving a 15-year prison sentence for his activism in 2011. Both he and Darwish have faced continued harassment for their work with BYSHR, BCHR, and the European-Bahraini Organisation for Human Rights (EBOHR), which Jawad founded.

After arresting Jawad multiple times on accusations related to his activism, in 2015 the authorities detained and tortured him in an attempt to force a false confession.¹ He was eventually released on bail in May 2015 and sought asylum in France, but a Bahraini court sentenced him in absentia to two years in prison and a fine for allegedly "collecting money from Bahrain and abroad without a permit."²

Though Darwish eventually left Bahrain to escape reprisal and join her husband in Europe, the Bahraini authorities have continued to target her as well. During the November 2016 wave of judicial harassment against activists and human rights defenders, a combination of riot police and plainclothes officers surrounded Darwish's family home in Sitra, Bahrain.³ The officials said they were there to bring Darwish in for questioning over accusations that she had participated in an "illegal gathering" just three months earlier. In actuality, she had not returned to Bahrain in over a year. According to Darwish, this incident was another "clear and obvious indication that charges brought against human rights defenders nowadays [are] baseless and untrue."



- 1 "Head of EBOHR Husain Parweez Subjected to Torture to Extract Confession," ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD, 23 February 2015, <http://www.adhrb.org/2015/02/head-of-ebohr-husain-parweez-subjected-to-torture-to-extract-confession/>
- 2 "Case History: Hussain Jawad," Frontline Defenders, 2016, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-hussain-jawad>
- 3 Erin Sigmon, "In 'bizarre' summons, Bahraini authorities attempt to interrogate exiled activist," ADHRB, 16 November 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/11/bizarre-summons-bahraini-authorities-attempt-interrogate-exiled-activist/>

BWU's member organizations alleged that the funding cuts came in reprisal for a critical shadow report on Bahrain's adherence to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that the group had submitted to the UN in 2014. According to a BWU leader, the government's decision is an "attempt to take revenge because we have issued the shadow report. There are four prominent journalists who support the regime who have called for the government to close our headquarters."⁷⁵ The government has also cut funding from other CSOs like the Bahrain Sociologists Society and Bahrain's chapter of Transparency International.⁷⁶ Due to the consequent funding deficiency, many of the women's groups were reportedly forced to curtail the support services they offered to Bahraini women, including legal and social services for victims of abuse.

In May 2016, an OHCHR team visited Bahrain and held training sessions for Bahraini civil society actors that focused on how to engage with the HRC and its human rights mechanisms. Soon after the visit, the Government of Bahrain began systematically imposing travel bans on civil society actors that had participated in these training sessions and/or sought to engage these same mechanisms. In June 2016, Bahraini authorities barred 13 activists, including an entire Bahraini civil society delegation to the 32nd HRC session, from travelling internationally. Among those banned were BCHR's Hussain Radhi and human rights defender Ebtisam al-Saegh, who had both participated in the OHCHR's workshops earlier that year.⁷⁷ The authorities also imposed travel bans on activist Ebrahim Demistani and the parents of Ali Mushaima, the first protester to be killed by security forces in 2011.⁷⁸

That same month, security forces re-arrested BCHR president Nabeel Rajab on charges stemming from tweets, newspaper articles, and television interviews in which he discussed topics like torture and the conflict in Yemen. Rajab remains detained and could face up to 18 years in prison on these charges (for more on acts of reprisal against Rajab and BCHR, see Section I.A).

Ahead of the 33rd HRC session in September 2016, the Bahraini government again imposed blanket travel bans on activists in order to prevent their participation in the Council, including BCHR's Husain Radhi, Nedal al-Salman, and Enas Oun. Other targeted were Mohamed al-Tajer, Ahmed al-Saffar, Ebtisam al-Saegh, Jalila al-Salman, Nazeeha Saeed, and Dr. Taha al-Durazi. In total, Bahraini authorities barred nearly 30 activists from international travel between June and September 2016.⁷⁹



Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei

In November 2016, security forces detained Mohammed al-Tajer and charged him with "insulting government institutions, inciting hatred of a religious sect, and misusing a telecommunications device" over a private WhatsApp message allegedly sent by al-Tajer in early 2016. Ironically, the WhatsApp message in question discussed the risk of government surveillance of private communications and the criminalization of certain forms of expression. Al-Tajer, who has frequently worked with OHCHR and its Special Procedures, believes the charges are in reprisal for his engagement with the UN system. Additionally, in 2015, Bahraini security forces forcibly disappeared al-Tajer's brother, Ali, and later prosecuted him on charges of joining an illegal terrorist organization, which he denies. Ali claims

he was severely tortured and forced to sign a false confession, and his trial has been rife with due process violations. Like his own charges, Mohamed al-Tajer fears that the government targeted his brother in reprisal for his work as a human rights lawyer and his cooperation with international human rights organizations.⁸⁰

The Government of Bahrain intensified its reprisals against civil society actors during the 34th session of the HRC in March 2017, going so far as to arrest, detain, and torture family members of the participants during the Council itself. Among those targeted were Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Director of Advocacy at the UK-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, and Ebtisam al-Saegh, who continues to live in Bahrain. Security forces have held Alwadaei's brother-in-law, Nazar Sayed Namaa Alwadaei, and mother-in-law, Hajar Mansoor Hassan, since early March, while the Council session was underway. The authorities charged both of them with planting "fake bombs" and they tortured Alwadaei's brother-in-law, forcing him to falsely implicate other family members in criminal activity and telling him that they were seeking revenge for Alwadaei's actions as a human rights activist. Earlier, after Alwadaei had participated in a highly publicized demonstration in London in October 2016, security forces also temporarily detained Alwadei's wife, Duaa, and their young son at the airport as they attempted to leave the country.⁸¹ Before finally permitting them to travel to the UK after seven hours of interrogation, an official threatened Alwadaei's wife and child, describing him as "an animal" and asking, "Where shall I go first, shall I go to his family or your family?"⁸²



Hajar Mansoor Hassan (left) and Nazar Sayed Namaa Alwadaei (right)

Also while the HRC session was underway, Bahraini authorities summoned Ebtisam al-Saegh's sister, Bassima, to a local police station and questioned her about al-Saegh's activities at the HRC. When al-Saegh herself returned to Bahrain after participating in the Council session, Bahraini authorities detained her for seven hours, questioned her about her work, and threatened her family.

On 1 May 2017, Bahrain underwent its third UPR cycle in Geneva. In the run-up to the review, the Bahraini government conducted what appeared to be a targeted campaign of judicial harassment directed at a range of civil society actors, including activists, human rights defenders, journalists, union members, political figures, and lawyers. The authorities summoned at least 30 such individuals for interrogation and subjected at least 32 to travel bans, preventing them from attending both the UPR pre-session events and the session itself.⁸³ On 21 April, for example, the authorities summoned two leaders of the Wa'ad political society, Ebrahim Sharif and Farida Ghulam, to appear for interrogation several days later. They were accused of participating in an "illegal gathering" in the village of Diraz and subjected to a travel ban, despite the fact that neither had visited the village in years.⁸⁴ Likewise, the government refused to cooperate with international human rights organizations in consultation for the UPR: ADHRB directly contacted the government requesting to participate in the consultation process, and was rejected; an ADHRB officer even submitted a 12-page visa application and formal request to travel to Bahrain, including a full itinerary, and never received a response. As a result of the government's reprisals, the number of independent Bahraini civil society actors able to leave the



Ebtisam al-Saegh



Al-Saegh's vehicle following the fire.



Yousif al-Hoori

country to attend the UPR sessions fell from 47 during the second cycle in 2012 to less than four in 2017.

Following the UPR session and ahead of the 35th HRC session in June 2017, Bahraini civil society actors have faced another wave of intimidation and retaliation from both government and unknown assailants. On 4 May, vandals burned and smashed the windshields of vehicles belonging to Salman al-Mahfooth, former Secretary-General of the GFBTU, outside his home.⁸⁵ Similarly, on 7 May, the car of Khalil al-Marzooq, former Deputy Secretary-General of the now-dissolved al-Wefaq political society, caught fire at dawn at his house.⁸⁶ The fire was attributed to an “electrical short circuit.” Human rights defender Ebtisam al-Saegh experienced particularly targeted harassment: on 12 May, the government-backed newspaper *Al Ayam* ran a front-page story accusing al-Saegh of fabricating documentation of rights violations and, three days later, her car was incinerated in a fire.⁸⁷ The Ministry of Interior issued a comment on Twitter stating that this incident was, again, the result of a “short circuit.”⁸⁸ The rash of car fires, and the government’s apparent indifference, follows a similar pattern of abuses committed by unknown individuals and pro-government gangs in 2011 and 2012.⁸⁹ In a prominent case that occurred in April 2012, for example, looters were caught on camera destroying a shop owned by a Shia proprietor while security forces appeared to stand by without preventing damage to the shop or arresting the perpetrators⁹⁰

The government also targeted the families of exiled activists after the latter called for protests of the Bahraini king’s visit to attend the UK’s Royal Windsor Horse Show in May 2017. Bahraini authorities summoned family members of these activists, who included BIRD’s Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, to Muharraq police station and forced them to call the demonstrators in Britain to request they stop the protests. One activist whose family was targeted, Yousif al-Hoori, leader of the Bahrain Centre Cultural Society based in Berlin,

did not attend the demonstrations and only voiced his support. Nevertheless, the authorities summoned al-Hoori’s father and sister and reportedly forced them to tell him that if he did not apologize to Bahrain’s king, they would not be released.⁹¹ The reprisals against these activists and their families came just days after CSOs wrote to the organizers of the event, HPower Group and Buckingham Palace, calling on them to sever ties with the Bahraini government due to the escalation of human rights abuses.⁹²

III. Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite its purported commitment to UN engagement, the Bahraini government has consistently failed to cooperate meaningfully with international human rights institutions like the OHCHR, and it has retaliated against civil society actors for attempting such engagement themselves. Moreover, the government has placed undue legal restrictions on CSOs and other independent organizations, eroding the space for peaceful expression and undermining the right to association. We therefore urge the international community to call on the Government of Bahrain to:

- Halt all government actions, such as travel bans, preventing representatives of CSOs and other individuals from traveling to engage international human rights mechanisms, like the UN HRC;
- Cease all acts of judicial harassment, reprisal, and intimidation against members of CSOs and civil society at large;
- Release and/or drop all charges against members of CSOs prosecuted for their work and for exercising the rights to free expression, association, and assembly;
- Restore all arbitrarily revoked citizenships and amend the citizenship law to restrict these practices;
- Amend substantially the Law of Associations to lift restrictions on the registration process for CSOs and to ensure the impartiality of the MLSD;
- Remove the restrictions in the Law of Associations and other regulations that forbid CSOs from engaging in political activity, that limit their fundraising, and that unnecessarily impair their functioning;
- Restrict the capacity of the MLSD to control the work of CSOs by instituting a third party, such as a judge or a special committee of the National Assembly, to pre-approve ministerial decisions;
- Impose further limits on the MLSD's power to interfere in the internal decisions of CSOs, such as by invalidating votes and replacing board members;
- Increase transparency regarding the processes and the decisions of the MLSD;
- Revise the pending draft Law of Associations to adhere to international standards on forming and maintaining CSOs; if necessary, create a new draft law that enshrines these standards;
- Permit public sector works to form unions and trade groups;
- Grant additional power to the elected lower chamber of the National Assembly in order to restrict the government's ability to promulgate legislation that would increase its control over CSOs;
- Ratify and implement the conventions of the ILO, which protect the liberties of CSOs. These include the conventions on the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize and the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining; and
- Fully and transparently implement all recommendations of the Third UPR Cycle.

(Endnotes)

- 1 “Bahrain Parliament Invites U.N. Rights Chief for Unrestricted Visit,” US News and World Report, 15 March 2017, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2017-03-15/bahrain-parliament-invites-un-rights-chief-for-unrestricted-visit>
- 2 Bill Law, “UN torture investigator ‘deeply disappointed’ with Bahrain,” BBC, 24 April 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22280381>; Alan White, “UN Torture Expert Says Britain Should Pressure Bahrain To Allow Him To Visit,” BuzzFeed News, 1 June 2016, https://www.buzzfeed.com/alanwhite/un-torture-expert-says-britain-should-pressure-bahrain-to-al?utm_term=.y19A0Nm9G#.vi7W2mpjJ
- 3 “Bahrain NGOs Condemn Reprisals against HRDs for UN Engagement,” Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy (BIRD), European Centre for Democracy & Human Rights (ECDHR), 2 September 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/09/democratic-doublespeak-bahrain-government-spins-summer-repression/>
- 4 Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 14 February 2002, <http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/details.jsp?id=7264>
- 5 *Interfere, Restrict, Control”: Restraints on Freedom of Association in Bahrain*, Human Rights Watch, 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/bahrain0613webwcover.pdf>
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2012 – Bahrain*, United States Department of State, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204567.pdf>
- 9 *Freedom of Association in the Arabian Gulf: The Case of Bahrain, Kuwait, and Yemen*, FIDH and AIHR, 31 March 2009, <https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/etude.pdf>
- 10 Abdunabi al-Ekry, “المجتمع المدني... كيف يكون شريكاً؟,” Al-Wasat, <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1108656.html>
- 11 *“Interfere, Restrict, Control”: Restraints on Freedom of Association in Bahrain*, Human Rights Watch, 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/bahrain0613webwcover.pdf>
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 *Bahrain’s Forgotten Workers: A Status Report on Labor Discrimination*
- 16 “The Closure of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights is ‘Final!’” Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), 26 March 2006, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/187>; “BCHR Board of Directors,” BCHR, 2017, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/bchr-board-directors>
- 17 “Bahrain: Activist Jailed After Criticizing Prime Minister,” Human Rights Watch, 29 September 2004, <http://pantheon.hrw.org/legacy/english/docs/2004/09/29/bahrain9413.htm>
- 18 Joe Stork, “Bahrain’s Crisis Worsens,” in Eds. David McMurray and Amanda Ufheil-Somers, *The Arab Revolts: Dispatches on Militant Democracy in the Middle East*, Indiana University Press: 2013, Print.
- 19 “Bahrain Imposes New Restriction and Denies Medical Care at Jau Prison,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 29 March 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/03/bahrain-imposes-new-restriction-denies-medical-care-jau-prison/>
- 20 “Nabeel Rajab Denied Bail Despite Deteriorating Health,” BIRD, 16 May 2017, <http://birdbh.org/2017/05/nabeel-rajab-denied-bail/>
- 21 “About Us,” Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, 2014, http://www.byshr.org/?page_id=1677
- 22 “Bahraini human rights defender Mohammed Al-Maskati faces prison if his sentence is upheld in December; NGOs call for his sentence to be overturned,” FIDH, 18 December 2015, <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/bahraini-human-rights-defender-mohammed-al-maskati-faces-prison-if>
- 23 “Bahrain: Acquittal of Mr. Mohammed Al-Maskati,” FIDH, 9 February 2016, <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/bahrain-acquittal-of-mr-mohammed-al-maskati>
- 24 “On International Human Rights Day, GCHR calls for detained human rights defenders to be freed,” Gulf Center for Human Rights, 10 December 2016, <http://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/1443>

- 25 *Inside Jau: Government Brutality in Bahrain's Central Prison*, ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD, May 2015, http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Inside-Jau-Report_Final.pdf
- 26 Ministry of Human Rights Continues Attempts to Take Over Civil Society Organizations and Cancel Bahrain Bar Society Elections,” BCHR, 18 December 2011, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/4910>
- 27 *Ibid.*; and *A Follow-Up Report on Bahrain's UPR Second Cycle: The Deteriorating Human Rights Situation in Bahrain*, ADHRB, 2014, http://adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ADHRB_February2014_web.pdf
- 28 Abdulnabi al-Ekry, “(دور منظمات المجتمع المدني في دعم وحماية حقوق الإنسان في مملكة البحرين (2)”) Al-Wasat, 2014, <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/891952.html>
- 29 “Bahrain Photographic Society Dissolved as Restrictions on Civil Society Associations Continue,” BCHR, 3 May 2016, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/7814>
- 30 Ministry of Human Rights Continues Attempts to Take Over Civil Society Organizations and Cancel Bahrain Bar Society Elections,” BCHR, 18 December 2011, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/4910>
- 31 “Continued Crackdown on Clerics and Freedom of Religion and Assembly,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, ECDHR, and JHRO, 27 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/continued-crackdown-clerics-freedom-religion-assembly/>
- 32 “Bahrain: Authorities Escalate Crackdown on Shia Clerics and Freedom of Religion,” BCHR, 17 June 2016, <http://bahrainrights.org/en/node/7914>
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 *Ibid.*; and *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain*, Kingdom of Bahrain, 14 February 2002, <http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/bh/bh020en.pdf>
- 37 Jesse Schatz, “Travel Ban Prevents Journalist From Leaving Bahrain,” ADHRB, 7 July 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/10317/>
- 38 “Authorities Impose Several Travel Bans as Crackdown on HRDs Continues,” CIVICUS, 23 September 2016, <https://monitor.civicus.org/newsfeed/2016/09/23/crackdown-against-human-rights-defenders-and-activists-continue-bahrain/>
- 39 “Bahrain: Gov’t Prosecutes Religious Freedoms Advocate Sheikh Maytham Al-Salman and Rights Activist Al-Derazi for ‘Illegal Gathering,’” ADHRB, 15 August 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/08/bahrain-govt-prosecutes-religious-freedoms-advocate-sheikh-maytham-al-salman-rights-activist-al-derazi-illegal-gathering/>
- 40 “Bahraini Authorities Continue Crackdown on Activists: More Human Rights Defenders and BCHR Members Face Reprisals,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 16 November 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/11/11328/>; “Ebtisam Al-Saegh summoned for interrogation,” Frontline Defenders, 23 November 2016, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/ebtisam-al-saegh-summoned-interrogation>
- 41 “Bahrain Authorities Prevent Civil Society Members and Human Rights Defenders from Participating in UN HRC 32,” ADHRB, 13 June 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/bahrain-authorities-prevent-civil-society-members-human-rights-defenders-participating-un-hrc-32/>
- 42 Brian Dooley, “Bahrain Travel Bans Reveal Insecurity,” Huffington Post, 15 November 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brian-dooley/bahrain-travel-bans-revea_b_12987660.html
- 43 “Bahraini Authorities Continue Crackdown on Activists: More Human Rights Defenders and BCHR Members Face Reprisals,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 16 November 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/11/11328/>
- 44 “Bahraini rights defender Hussain Radhi charged over tweets, retweets,” IFEX, 21 November 2016, https://www.ifex.org/bahrain/2016/11/21/charged_over_tweets_retweets/
- 45 “Case History: Nazeeha Saeed,” Frontline Defenders, 2016, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-nazeeha-saeed>
- 46 Abdulnabi al-Ekry, “المجتمع المدني... كيف يكون شريكاً؟,” Al-Wasat, <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1108656.html>
- 47 United Nations, Human Rights Council, *National Report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 – Bahrain, A/HRC/WG.6/27/BHR/1*, Kingdom of Bahrain, 13 February 2017, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/031/00/PDF/G1703100.pdf?OpenElement>
- 48 Abdulnabi al-Ekry, “المجتمع المدني... كيف يكون شريكاً؟,” Al-Wasat, <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1108656.html>

- 49 Frederic Wehrey, *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf: From the Iraq War to the Arab Uprisings*, Columbia University Press: 2014, Print, 61.
- 50 "Interfere, Restrict, Control": Restraints on Freedom of Association in Bahrain, Human Rights Watch, 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/bahrain0613webwcover.pdf>
- 51 United Nations, Human Rights Council, *National Report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 – Bahrain*, A/HRC/WG.6/27/BHR/1, Kingdom of Bahrain, 13 February 2017, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/031/00/PDF/G1703100.pdf?OpenElement>
- 52 "Bahraini rights defender faces reprisals for collaborating with UN," IFEX, 20 June 2013, https://www.ifex.org/bahrain/2013/06/20/detained_for_protesting/
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 "CIHRS documents acts of reprisals carried out against defenders from the Gulf region for cooperating with the UN," BCHR, 12 March 2013, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/5676>
- 55 "Bahrain: Sayed Yousif Almuhafdah Acquitted in Bahrain (UA 8/13)," Amnesty International, 13 September 2013, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent-actions/bahrain-sayed-yousif-almuhafdah-acquitted-in-bahrain-ua-813/>
- 56 "An Overview of ADHRB Engagement at the 26th Session of the UN Human Rights Council," ADHRB, 30 June 2014, <http://www.adhrb.org/2014/06/an-overview-of-adhrb-engagement-at-the-26th-session-of-the-united-nations-human-rights-council/#>
- 57 "An Overview of ADHRB Engagement at the 28th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council," ADHRB, 6 April 2015, <http://www.adhrb.org/2015/04/an-overview-of-adhrb-engagement-at-the-28th-session-of-the-united-nations-human-rights-council/>
- 58 "Human Rights Defender Nabeel Rajab Sentenced to 6 Months in Prison," ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD, 20 January 2015, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/7234>
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 "Verdict Expected for Nabeel Rajab 20 January, NGOs Call for Charges to be Dropped," 19 January 2015, <http://birdbh.org/2015/01/verdict-expected-for-nabeel-rajab-20-january-ngos-call-for-charges-to-be-dropped/>
- 61 "103 MEPs call for dropping the charges against Nabeel Rajab," FIDH, 2 February 2015, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/north-africa-middle-east/bahrain/16351-103-meps-call-for-dropping-the-charges-against-nabeel-rajab>
- 62 "UK Members of Parliament Sign Open Letter to Foreign Secretary Regarding Persecution of Nabeel Rajab," BIRD, 19 January 2015, <http://birdbh.org/2015/01/uk-members-of-parliament-sign-open-letter-to-foreign-secretary-regarding-persecution-of-nabeel-rajab/>
- 63 "Press briefing notes on Bahrain and Destruction of places of religious significance by ISIL," OHCHR, 3 October 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15135&LangID=E#sthash.7SMLk4YI.dpuf>; Mandates of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, BHR 13/2014, OHCHR, 14 October 2014, [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/28th/Public_-_UA_Bahrain_14.10.14_\(13.2014\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/28th/Public_-_UA_Bahrain_14.10.14_(13.2014).pdf)
- 64 "Case History: Maryam al-Khawaja," Frontline Defenders, 2017, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-maryam-al-khawaja>
- 65 Mandates of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, BHR 15/2014, OHCHR, 18 December 2014, [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/29th/Public_-_UA_Bahrain_18.12.14_\(15.2014\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/29th/Public_-_UA_Bahrain_18.12.14_(15.2014).pdf)
- 66 "Bahrain: Human rights defenders Husain Abdulla and Abdunabi Al-Ekri threatened at the Human Rights Council," FIDH, 19 March 2015, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/north-africa-middle-east/bahrain/bahrain-human-rights-defenders-husain-abdulla-and-abdunabi-al-ekri>; See also: "Section G: National Human Rights Institution" in *Bahrain's Third Cycle UPR: A Record of Repression*, ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD, 2017, http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017.2.28_Web-Version_ADHRB_BCHR_BIRD_Bahrain-3rd-Cycle-UPR-Assessment.pdf
- 67 "Commissioners," National Institute for Human Rights, Kingdom of Bahrain, 2016, <http://www.nihr.org.bh/EN/Organisation/CommissionerMain>; Note: The web page has not been updated to reflect the government's recent reshuffling of the NIHR's commissioners, but Alshaer remains a member.

- 68 “Arrest of Inter-Faith Activist and Columbia Global Freedom of Expression expert Maytham Al Salman,” Global Freedom of Expression, Columbia University, 10 August 2015, <https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/updates/2015/08/arrest-of-inter-faith-activist-and-columbia-global-freedom-of-expression-expert-maytham-al-salman/>
- 69 “Authorities accuse human rights activist Doctor Maytham al-Salman of inciting hatred against the regime,” BCHR, 10 August 2015, <http://bahrainrights.org/en/node/7603>
- 70 “Sheikh Maytham Al Salman Clarifies Blasphemy Laws in Bahrain,” Global Freedom of Expression, Columbia University, 22 March 2016, <https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/updates/2016/03/sheikh-maytham-al-salman-explains-illegitimacy-charges-defaming-religious-symbols-brought/>
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 “Bahrain: Gov’t Prosecutes Religious Freedoms Advocate Sheikh Maytham Al-Salman and Rights Activist Al-Derazi for ‘Illegal Gathering,’” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, ECDHR, and Justice Human Rights Organization (JHRO), <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/08/bahrain-govt-prosecutes-religious-freedoms-advocate-sheikh-maytham-al-salman-rights-activist-al-derazi-illegal-gathering/>
- 74 “Women’s groups accuse Bahrain of cutting funds on political grounds,” Middle East Eye, 23 June 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/womens-groups-accuse-bahrain-cutting-funding-political-grounds-1787893824>
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 “Bahrain Authorities Prevent Civil Society Members and Human Rights Defenders from Participating in UN HRC 32,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, ECDHR, and JHRO, 13 June 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/bahrain-authorities-prevent-civil-society-members-human-rights-defenders-participating-un-hrc-32/>
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 “Bahrain NGOs Condemn Reprisals against HRDs for UN Engagement,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 2 September 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/09/democratic-doublespeak-bahrain-government-spins-summer-repression/>
- 80 “Urgent Action: Detention of Ali Isa al-Tajer,” ADHRB, 2 December 2015, <http://www.adhrb.org/2015/12/urgent-action-detention-of-ali-isa-al-tajer/>
- 81 Jamie Doward, “Bahrain prevents family of dissident from flying to London to join him,” The Guardian, 29 October 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/29/bahrain-london-duaa-sayed-alwadaei>
- 82 “Bahrain: Activist’s Family Targeted,” Human Rights Watch, 6 March 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/06/bahrain-activists-family-targeted>
- 83 “Bahrain: Widespread Reprisals against Activists Ahead of UPR,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 26 April 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/04/bahrain-widespread-reprisals-activists-ahead-upr/>
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 مجهولون يهشمون زجاج سيارة الأمين العام السابق لاتحاد النقابات ويحرقون سيارة ابنه بالصور... *Al-Wasat*, 12 May 2017, <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1237770.html>
- 86 بالفديو والصور... تماس كهربائي يؤدي لإندلاع حريق بسيارة خليل المرزوق *Al-Wasat*, 12 May 2017, <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1237934.html>
- 87 Instagram account of Ebtisam al-Saegh, Instagram, 15 May 2017, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BUGF0JxBVVb/>
- 88 Twitter account of the Ministry of Interior, Kingdom of Bahrain, @moi_bahrain, 14 May 2017, https://twitter.com/moi_bahrain/status/863933850375860225
- 89 “Bahrain Escalates Campaign of Reprisals,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 16 May 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/05/bahrain-escalates-campaign-reprisal/>
- 90 Ibid.; and “Thugs backed up by police attacking Jawad 24 Hours supermarket,” BCHR (YouTube), 12 April 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRrsOdhrrsc&app=desktop>
- 91 Twitter account of Maryam al-Khawaja, @MARYAMALKHAWAJA, 13 May 2017, <https://twitter.com/MARYAMALKHAWAJA/status/863358675922104321>
- 92 “Bahrain Escalates Campaign of Reprisals,” ADHRB, BCHR, BIRD, and ECDHR, 16 May 2017, <http://www.adhrb.org/2017/05/bahrain-escalates-campaign-reprisal/>





www.adhrb.org