



Mr. President,

Alsalam and ADHRB thank Special Rapporteur Bennoune for her report reviewing cultural rights over the past ten years.

Bahrain has systematically marginalized its Baharna indigenous community by repressing its cultural heritage. Security forces repeatedly target, arrest, and denaturalize Shia clerics and religious leaders, while the government military distributes a pamphlet – Nur al-Sunna - that denounces non-Sunni sects of Islam, including Shiism, as heretical and stoking sectarian animosity.

Bahrain has attempted to erase the Baharna indigenous from their own history. State textbooks omit the history of the Baharna in Bahrain and their role before the AlKhalifas' clan arrival to Bahrain. The government has also destroyed multiple cultural heritage sites, including the Pearl Roundabout, which memorialized Bahrain's historical role as a pearl exporter and was the site of peaceful protests in 2011. The government paved over the roundabout and removed its likeness from coins, postcards, and photos on government websites. It even requested the UN return a painting of the monument, which is located just outside this Council room.

The intentional erasure of the Baharna indigenous community's past affects their present. Bahrain excludes the Shia community from public employment sectors and the educational system. For example, Bahrain's security forces are predominantly Sunni even though the majority of Bahrain's citizen population is Shia. Additionally, the government refuses Shia religious education in schools.

The systematic cultural erasure in Bahrain comes from the highest level in the country as the King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa AlKhalifa has claimed that before the arrival of his clan to Bahrain the country lacked civility or prosperity in a direct attack on the indigenous Baharna.

Will your office request site visits to investigate the erasure of Baharna indigenous cultural practices?

Thank you.