



# 2021

**The year of systematic policies to whitewash human rights violations in Bahrain :2021**



## 2021: The year of systematic policies to whitewash human rights violations in Bahrain



The year 2021 witnessed systematic whitewashing campaigns by Bahrain authorities, stemming from critical events. These included incidents at Jau and Dry Dock prisons such as the Ombudsman office acquitting prison officials of any violations committed against Dr. AbdulJalil Al-Singace, who has been on hunger strike since July 8 to the date in protest against the mistreatment and the confiscation of his research. Legislatively, authorities whitewashed the extent of commitment to implement the new Restorative Justice Law and the Alternative Sentencing Law. Furthermore, authorities failed to obscure the continued deterioration of the health situation in prisons due to the Coronavirus pandemic as a result of failure to take adequate measures as well as the continued discrimination against political prisoners at various levels. The human rights situation exploded, and Bahrainis rose up after the death of a political prisoner, Husain Barakat, as a result of being infected with the Coronavirus and being subjected to medical neglect, the death of two prisoners, Abbas Mal

Allah and Mohamed Mansoor, as a result of the medical neglect of their chronic diseases which they did not receive the necessary health care for, as well as the bloody April 17 attack on political prisoners in Jau Prison due to their protest against ill-treatment and violation of their most basic rights. Outside prisons, this year has also consisted of the Ministry of Interior's failed attempts to whitewash violations of religious freedoms during Ashura commemorations. Through this report, ADHRB will attempt to present systematic human rights violations monitored in 2021, which were met with systematic whitewashing by the authorities.

### **Prison officials acquitted of the violations committed against Dr. Abdul-Jalil Al-Singace**

As of 8 July, prominent political prisoner Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace, an academic, blogger, and leader of the political opposition in Bahrain, has been on a hunger strike to protest ill-treatment in the notorious Jau Prison as well as the confiscation of his research. The Ombudsman Office failed to adequately [investigate](#) the confiscation of Dr. Al-Singace's research and the ill-treatment he was subjected to, and the Ombudsman absolved prison officials of any wrongdoing without interviewing Dr. Al-Singace, while accusing him of alleged smuggling of his research.

Consequently, on 30 July 2021, 16 human rights organizations, including Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, Amnesty International, Scholars at Risk, and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, issued a [statement](#) calling for the release of Bahraini academic, blogger, and human rights defender Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace.

This is not the first time that Dr. Al-Singace has gone on a hunger strike to protest ill-treatment and deprivation of the most basic rights. Rather, he has repeatedly gone on strikes, including on 21 March 2015, when he [began](#) a hunger strike to protest collective punishment, torture, and degrading practices, as well as the deteriorating general conditions in prison. He stated that he had not yet received rubber stoppers for his crutches, even though the old ones had been worn out for over two years.

Dr. Al-Singace is serving a life sentence in Bahrain's notorious Jau Prison for his role in Bahrain's pro-democracy uprising during the 2011 Arab Spring. He is a former lecturer at the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Bahrain and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. In 2007, he participated in the [Draper Hills](#) Program at the Center for Democracy and Rule of Law Development at Stanford University.

Dr. Al-Singace [suffers](#) from several chronic diseases, including post-polio syndrome, and a musculoskeletal condition that requires the use of crutches or a wheelchair, making his hunger strike particularly harmful to his health. Since he started his most recent hunger strike, he has already lost 20kg of weight and has been

taken to an external hospital for observation. During his time in prison, he repeatedly complained of medical negligence by the prison authorities, a common method of punishment against political prisoners in Bahrain.

### **Whitewashing methods in the extent of compliance with the implementation of the new Restorative Justice Law**

Since King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa issued the [Law](#) on Restorative Justice and Protection of Children from Abuse on 15 February 2021 and its [entry into force](#) on 18 August 2021, its effects have not been apparent in terms of curbing the violations and ill-treatment of young convicts in New Dry Dock Prison. On 18 November 2021, ADHRB published [report](#), outlining information on the cases of 4 (former) minor political prisoners in New Dry Dock Prison. The judicial and legislative authorities have recognized that this law requires prioritizing the best interests of the child in all judgments, decisions, and procedures related to them, regardless of the responsible entity. They have also acknowledged the modern guarantees it provides in protecting the rights of children and protecting them from abuse, exploitation or moral, physical, spiritual neglect, as well as guaranteeing their health, education, and social care, noting that all the above is done in accordance with the constitution and international human rights standards, especially the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Bahrain acceded in 1991, and its two optional protocols in 2004. However, all the minors mentioned in this report, which is just a sample reflecting the reality of the situation, suffered violations committed against them infringing on several articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention against Torture (CAT), and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Law of the Treatment of Prisoners ( Nelson Mandela Rules), as young convicts were subjected to unfair trials and the worst forms of physical and psychological torture, ill-treatment and deprivation of liberty, and were denied contact with their families or the ability to hire a lawyer, forced to confess to fabricated charges under torture, denied access to health care, and faced sectarian discrimination and insults.

In 2021, the arbitrary arrests of minors persisted, especially at the beginning of September, which children under the age of 16, on the background of several charges, [first](#) of which was expressing their opinion and protesting against the normalization of the Bahraini government with the Israeli entity, and the second being the charge of sheltering individuals accused of burning the ATM of the National Bank of Bahrain in Al-Dair. The arrests occurred in several towns, most notably: Samaheej, Sitra, Al-Sahla Al-Shamaliya, and other areas, or by summoning the minors to stations such as the 17th Roundabout police station. Minors were arrested without being presented with an arrest warrant, and their lawyers and family members were not permitted to be with them during the interrogation. Also, the children were disappeared and their families were not able to know their whereabouts except through unofficial means, did not receive calls from their children, and were not informed of the official charges on which they were arrested. Institutions concerned with preserving children's rights or human rights had no role in revealing the continuing violations against these minors.

Authorities have deliberately whitewashed the violations and ill-treatment suffered by young convicts in New Dry Dock Prison through the institutions that are supposed to be concerned with monitoring and investigating these violations and providing the right to the best treatment for prisoners, headed by the Ministry of Interior:

- The Ombudsman Office tried to prove the success of the Restorative Justice [Law](#) for Children, which is supposed to protect them from abuse, by [visiting](#) the Correctional and Rehabilitation Center and the pretrial detention center in Dry Dock on 1 November, to inspect the premises of young prisoners and conduct randomized interviews. The Ombudsman declared that prisoners have full access to living and health care and are not deprived of video and voice calls or any other basic rights. This clearly demonstrated the institutional neglect on the reality of the situation. ADHRB has consistently reported on the lack of healthcare as well as the psychological and physical suffering of minor prisoners both during and after their release.
- On 28 September, a documentary [episode](#) of the program “Distance Zero” broadcast by Al-Jazeera, presented the worst violations against young convicts in New Dry Dock Prison. The information was acquired through direct testimonies and facts from the prisoners. Bahraini authorities quickly responded through their official [media](#) denying the validity of these claims. However, a political prisoner from inside the prison refuted the allegations of the government.
- Bahraini authorities also practiced their usual methods of whitewashing before the international community through a statement they delivered at the 48th session of the Human Rights Council held in Geneva between 13 September and 18 October, where they [referred](#) to Bahrain’s implementation of the Children’s Restorative Justice Law, claiming that it guarantees the rights of children and protects them from abuse in accordance with international human rights standards.

On 21 November 2021, families of several young convicts in New Dry Dock Prison went to the Ombudsman Office building to file complaints after contact with their children was interrupted as they entered the fifth day of the hunger strike. They also complained that their children were subjected to ill-treatment, and there were reports of low sugar level among the prisoners. Mothers were prevented from entering the Ombudsman Office building to plead their case, under the pretext of precautionary measures due to the Coronavirus restrictions. However, at the same time, the Manama Dialogue was being held, which including unrestricted meetings between officials. The young convicts had announced their hunger strike in protest of these violations, their detention in their cells for 23 hours, the confiscation of their clothes, blankets, and religious books, and the threat of worsening punishment if the strike continued.

## Attempts to cover up violations through a selective commitment to the application of the Alternative Sentencing Law

On 2 April 2021, Assistant Attorney General Wael Bou Ali [stated](#) that 126 prisoners would be released under the Alternative Sentencing Law. This decision included only one prisoner of conscience who had been arrested and sentenced on charges of reading Ziyarat Ashura on 3 September 2020, with only two months remaining until the end of his sentence. The rest of the prisoners included in the release order were all criminal prisoners.

On 8 April, another group of 73 prisoners was scheduled to be [released](#) under alternative sentences, bringing the total number of prisoners released since the implementation of the Alternative Sentencing Law to 3,297. As of 19 April, 54 political prisoners were released under the alternative sentences. This second batch included the eldest political prisoner, 75-year-old [Mohammed Jawad Parwiz](#), whose case was documented by ADHRB, as well as prisoners: Sayed Ali Fadhel, Jalal Saeed Al-Modaber, Hadi Ebrahim Al-Arab, Mohamed Sharaf, Ali Al-Ghanimi, Mohamed Al-Moallem, Yusuf Mohamed Fathi, Ahmed Hasan Al-Madhoon, and others. This was preceded by the release of prominent human rights defender Nabeel Rajab, under alternative sentences, in June 2020. It is worth mentioning that the Bahraini authorities largely apply this law to those who only have few months left for their sentence to end and have already spent the longest period of time in prison.

So far, the authorities have excluded political prisoners sentenced to long-term sentences, although many of them have applied to be included in alternative penalties. Among them is prominent imprisoned human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja. An announcement by human rights activist Maryam Al-Khawaja on her Twitter account on 4 October 2021 says: “The imprisoned human rights activist Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja submitted a letter to the Sentencing Department at the Ministry of Interior to benefit from the Alternative Sentencing Law, and indicated in his communication that the motive is to accept the lesser of two harms, not to waive the original demand, which is to repeal the sentence and offer reparation for damages as justice dictates and as required by international organizations “.

The adoption of the Alternative Sentencing Law in 2017 was the product of joint cooperation between Bahrain and the United Kingdom in the judicial field, specifically alternative penalties, and their implementation in criminal cases. It has become apparent that these alternative penalties only include criminal prisoners who committed criminal offenses as stated in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Precautionary Measures for Prisoners. However, Bahrain violates international norms and United Nations rules in this regard and applies it to political prisoners and prisoners of conscience who were arrested simply for expressing their opinion, imposing on them measures that degrade their human dignity.



It is worth noting that every year, with the beginning of Ramadan, a group of prisoners is released under a royal pardon, but usually most of them are criminal prisoners. In 2021, a royal [decree](#) pardoned 91 prisoners, most of whom were also foreigners. On 15 December 2021, on the occasion of the National Day, a royal [decree](#) was issued to pardon 105 prisoners, which did not include any political prisoners.

### **Covering up authorities' failure to manage the Coronavirus outbreak in prisons**

At the end of March 2021, the government institutions in Bahrain, along with the official human rights institutions, tried by various means to cover up their failure to manage the Coronavirus outbreak in prisons and whitewash its numerous violations against prisoners infected with the Coronavirus despite the monitored situation. Many audio recordings surfaced from inside the prison about the prison administration's failure to provide prisoners with the minimum measures of prevention and treatment inside the prison. Meanwhile human rights organizations, the international community and family members of prisoners all called for the release political prisoners before it is too late.

This refuted what the official institutions claimed, with the Ministry of Interior announcing the continuation precautionary measures, while it did not state the true number of infections. The parents could only know their children's infection status through the Ministry of Health website which publishes the names of the infected Bahrainis in general, without the Ministry of Interior assuming its responsibility of informing them in this aspect. It only admitted that there was one case on 31 February 2021 and [three cases](#) on 23 March 2021, then proceeded to prevent the Ministry of Health from publishing the names and number of daily infections.

Meanwhile, official statements continued to deny the infections and whitewashed the failure to take appropriate measures. The outbreak of the second wave of the virus in Jau Prison was on 22 May, and resulted in the death of political prisoner [Husain Barakat](#) in Salmaniya Hospital after contracting the virus. Nearly 60% of the 255 political prisoners in Building 12 were infected with the virus. With regard to the previous outbreak in March, at least 140 prisoners were infected. Through the timeline below, we can refute the allegations of officials compared to the reality inside the prison at the time:

- On 21 February 2021, the first case of coronavirus infection was recorded in Jau Prison. The administration claimed that the prisoner had been isolated and treated, and all contacts had tested negative.
- On 23 March 2021, the General Directorate of Reform and Rehabilitation issued a statement revealing that three prisoners had contracted the virus. During the routine examination of all prisoners and staff at Jau Prison, one prisoner tested positive. After testing those who had been in contact with him, two other prisoners tested positive. Here begins the inconsistency and lack of transparency of the administration and related ministries. While the administration has consistently insisted that all staff and prisoners be routinely tested, all three cases *should* have been recorded during routine testing, not after the first case was discovered.

- On 26 March 2021, only three days after the issuance of the statement of the General Directorate of Reform and Rehabilitation, activists and families of prisoners confirmed, through the Ministry of Health website, that the results of the examination of 28 individuals in Building 21, Ward 3 were positive, which means that the administration did not disclose the true number of cases, likely to avoid a scandal ahead of the Formula 1 Grand Prix on 26 and 27 March.
- On 28 March 2021, the Ombudsman issued a statement explaining that it reviewed with the Jau Prison administration the requests submitted by the families of prisoners to inquire about their health condition and concluded that the administration implements the recommended health protocol by isolating patients in prison in the designated places and providing them with the necessary treatment under the supervision of a specialized medical team from the Ministry of Health. The General Directorate of Reform and Rehabilitation also issued a statement confirming that it was working to ensure the health and safety of all prisoners. It boasted of establishing a quarantine center and treating infected cases, redistributing prisoners, opening new buildings, introducing electronic services, sterilizing facilities, and isolating contacts with infected cases for a period of 14 days. It also highlighted efforts to enable infected prisoners to contact their families as quickly as possible. These statements reflect the lack of transparency of these government agencies in revealing the reality of the situation in Jau Prison, proven by the fact that the number of cases was not disclosed in any of the statements. Furthermore, authorities had taken a number of punitive and restrictive measures in order to prevent further information about the situation in Jau Prison from reaching the outside world.
- Starting 29 March 2021, the Ministry of Health has refrained from publishing the results of prisoners' tests on its website, which contradicts the previous statement of the General Directorate that highlighted the use of electronic services. The site notes that the prisoner has undergone the test, but the results have not come out yet, even when 24 or even 48 hours have passed since the prisoner was tested.
- On 30 March 2021, it was recorded and confirmed that the number of infected prisoners reached 62, according to the prisoners' families, but they estimated that the real number of cases was much higher than that, especially in Building 21 - the main site of the outbreak. ADHRB also received [news](#) of infections in Buildings 13, 14 and 23. Families were unable to communicate with their imprisoned sons for more than a week. However, on the same day, the head of the National Institution for Human Rights, Maria Khoury, claimed that all cases infected with the Coronavirus, which were recently monitored in the correction and rehabilitation centers, receive the necessary medical care around the clock, denying any shortcomings in the rights of the infected prisoners. Likewise, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives, Mohamed El-Sisi Buainain, considered that prisoners in Jau prison are treated humanely and allowed to contact their families for free, with no mention of the current number of active cases in Jau Prison. Buainain also claimed that 100% of the prisoners who applied for vaccination had been vaccinated, without revealing the number of prisoners or their percentage of the total number of prisoners who are vaccinated, which does not provide any insight into the health status in Jau Prison.



- On 31 March 2021, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Naser Abdul Rahman Al Khalifa, stated that the Reform and Rehabilitation Center intends to arrange visits for vaccinated prisoners, provided that their families or those who wish to visit them are also vaccinated, draft a list of prisoners who meet the criteria for alternative sentences, and provide vaccination for 100% of the applicants. Despite this statement, vaccinated parents were not allowed to visit their children. On the other hand, not all prisoners received the vaccine because they refused to receive specific types and were not allowed to choose the type. A number of them remain unvaccinated.
- In another statement, he focused on warning against politicizing the status of prisoners, exploiting families' feelings, and gaining sympathy through deception by groups and individuals, operating with un-patriotic agendas, attempting to frame legitimate fears by activists, families of prisoners, and human rights organizations as malicious. Moreover, he threatened that legal action should be taken against those who break the law and respond to these calls for mobilization, which would set a precedent for a wave of repression against those who speak up about the situation in Jau Prison that the authorities were trying to cover up. The institutions also practiced methods of whitewashing through their official media, where Bahrain TV presented a report boasting of the alleged achievements and precautionary steps of the General Directorate for Reform and Rehabilitation where it conducted interviews with a number of criminal prisoners to improve the image of the prison after the outbreak of the Coronavirus.
- On 4 April 2021, the National Task Force to Combat the Coronavirus held a press [conference](#), during which the Director of Public Security, Tareq Al-Hasan, discussed news related to Coronavirus in Bahrain. With regard to the outbreak of the disease in Jau Prison, he reiterated the same points that other government agencies had previously adopted in their statements with the aim of reducing families' frustration and did not provide any new information about the Coronavirus situation in prisons.
- On 26 May 2021, the General Directorate of Reform and Rehabilitation announced that the applied precautionary measures follow medical standards, and their implementation is supervised by the Ministry of Health. However, globally recognized health procedures were absent, in addition to the fact that prisoners suffered before the pandemic from a deteriorating health environment and from the absence of the simplest hygienic conditions that caused the spread of diseases among them. Day after day, parents' concern increased about the unknown fate of their children since 21 May, and they tried various ways to know whether their children were infected, through the application of "[conscious society](#)" of the Ministry of Health. However, ADHRB learned that a large number of prisoners underwent a rapid. When their infection is confirmed, they are isolated and deprived of contact, while their name is not listed on the official page of the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Interior should take full responsibility for this act as it appears that it deliberately conducts a rapid test for prisoners to obscure the real number of infections inside the prison.
- On 26 May 2021, the Ministry of Interior also said in a tweet that all inmates who applied for the vaccine have been vaccinated, given that the health and safety of inmates and workers is a major priority in accordance with the Law of the Correction and Rehabilitation Institution and its executive regulations. However, since the beginning of the outbreak of the virus in prison, the ministry has not published any official statistics showing the number of prisoners who received the

vaccine compared to the total number of prisoners, as well as the number of prisoners who applied for the vaccine and did not receive it yet. Police and officers are one of the main factors in the prison infecting prisoners.

As soon as news came from inside the prison about the infection of a number of political prisoners, prisoners' families and solidarity activists participated in demonstrations and protests in different areas in Bahrain which continue to this day. They demand to know the fate of their children whose lives are endangered as a result of failure to take immediate measures. Families also appealed for the release of their sons and all political prisoners. As a result of participating in the peaceful demonstrations, dozens of demonstrators were summoned for [interrogation](#).

Under the hashtag “#Release\_Bahraini\_Prisoners” and “#Save\_Bahraini\_Prisoners,” Arab and international activists interacted on Twitter with thousands of tweets calling for the release of prisoners to protect them from infection.

### **Political prisoner Husain Barakat, a victim of the Coronavirus**

On 9 June 2021, political prisoner Husain Barakat [died](#) in the intensive care unit at Salmaniya Hospital after contracting the Coronavirus in Jau Prison Building 12 despite receiving two doses of the Sinopharm vaccine. Husain Barakat died at the age of 48 after he tested positive on 27 May 2021. According to family members, Husain had previously received two doses of the Sinopharm vaccine, but his condition deteriorated after the diagnosis, and he was later transferred from Jau Prison to Salmaniya Hospital, where he was placed on a ventilator in the Intensive Care Unit. His death was later announced on social media. Husain was among 53 people sentenced to life imprisonment on 15 May 2018 after being convicted in a mass trial of 138 defendants for allegedly belonging to a terrorist cell known as the “Zulfiqar Brigades”. He was also among 115 defendants stripped of their citizenship in the same case. After reviewing the case, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [declared](#) that international fair trial standards had not been met and the violations were “so egregious” that they constituted an arbitrary deprivation of liberty. Husain's citizenship had been restored by a royal decree.

### **A further two prisoners die as a result of medical negligence:**

The death of two prisoners, Abbas Mal Allah and Hasan AbdulNabi Mansoor as a result of medical negligence shocked the people of Bahrain this year. They died amid the deteriorating health environment and the spread of diseases as a result of a lack of hygiene and neglect. Authorities sought to cover this up and practiced methods of whitewashing through the media to present a positive image of prisons.

## The death of political prisoner Abbas Mal Allah

On the morning of 6 April 2021, the family of the Bahraini political prisoner in Jau Prison, Abbas Mal Allah, who was sentenced to 15 years in prison, read the shocking news of his death, a result of a heart attack, on the website of the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Interior published the statement, without the prison administration informing the family in advance, violating the principles and minimum standards of human rights. The statement did not refer to the chronic diseases that Mal Allah had suffered over the 10 years he spent in prison, which he did not receive any treatment for despite his and his family's demands over this decade.

Although the Ministry of Interior claimed he was immediately transferred to the prison clinic and underwent the necessary first aid until his health condition stabilized and then died when he was transferred to Salmaniya Hospital, the testimony of his fellow inmate "Mahmood Isa", which was published on several social media accounts refutes these allegations. He confirmed that around 12 a.m., Abbas woke up thinking that he was suffering from heartburn, then he went to the bathroom for 3 to 4 minutes. At 12:10, when he got out, he fell unconscious, and his colleagues started shouting, calling the police forces, and hitting the doors because there was no other way to call them.

At first, the prison administration did not respond to the inmates' cries for help, but eventually, two police officers appeared and said they could not get Abbas out of the cell without the permission of a superior, prompting the inmates to continue knocking on the door for ten minutes until the officer who opened it returned. He said he didn't know what to do, so one of the prisoners told him to call an ambulance, but Abbas wasn't taken to the hospital until 1:30 a.m. it took the guards 45 minutes to call an ambulance. At 3:45 a.m., the duty officer told Abbas's cellmates to collect his clothes and belongings. He also told them that Abbas was in Salmaniya Hospital and that his condition was stable. In the early hours of the morning, the prisoners were asked to sign a statement disclaiming the authorities' responsibility, which the prisoners refused to do.

As soon as the death of the prisoner Abbas Mal Allah was announced, cries and protests erupted from inside the buildings and cells of Jau Prison, where prisoners expressed their anger over the neglect their colleague suffered, which led to his death. They chanted "God is Great" while hitting the doors of the cells, as a condemnation of what happened. The eyewitness "Isa" also complained of overcrowding in the cells, where 17 prisoners share a cell made for 10 people, forcing seven prisoners to sleep on the floor.

Abbas Mal Allah is a political prisoner who was arrested in 2011 for his activism and support for the democratic movement that was launched during that period, and he was sentenced to 15 years and six months in prison. Abbas was subjected to severe torture and was shot in the thigh from a close range during his arrest. He suffered bruises on the face and chest and lost consciousness due to the beating he was subjected to and

remained in the intensive care unit for more than a week. After his arrest, Abbas' brother denounced the treatment his brother was subjected to by the Jau Prison administration, "my brother is subjected to a humiliating search when the family visits him and when he goes to court, in addition to sexual harassment, and he even refuses to go out for visits because of this treatment." He pointed out that the prison administration deliberately gives them a long period between each visit, unlike the rest of the prisoners, who would receive 3 visits per month.

In recent years, Abbas Mal Allah, after returning from the isolation building where he was held for two years, suffered from heart problems, stomach ulcers, and colon problems without receiving treatment. Abbas's 9-year-old son had published a video message in 2019 stating that his father had started a hunger strike after his isolation, calling for his treatment and release.

### **The death of the prisoner, Hasan AbdulNabi Mansoor**

On 25 July 2021, 35-year-old Bahraini prisoner Hasan AbdulNabi Mansoor tragically died at Salmaniya Medical Complex after complications from sickle cell anemia, amid reports of medical negligence by authorities at Dry Dock Detention Center. The Bahraini Ministry of Interior confirmed the news of his death in a tweet via its Twitter account and failed to acknowledge reports of medical negligence or confirm whether an investigation will be conducted into the death. ADHRB received his death certificate and the medical report for the reason of death, where the doctor attribute his death to "ventricular fibrillation leading to a heart attack" while indicating that the prior reason was "sickle-cell anemia".

Hasan AbdulNabi suffered from severe sickle cell disease and was not given his prescribed medications during his imprisonment, including morphine tablets, for 5 days from 14 July 2021 until he was transferred to hospital on 19 July 2021. He was dependent on morphine tablets to relieve his pain, and the failure of the authorities to provide him with them led to the decline in his condition. The prison authorities also failed to order his admission to the prison clinic in a timely manner, despite Hasan AbdulNabi's repeated requests, which may have exacerbated his deteriorating health.

Eyewitnesses said that Hasan used to go to the officers every day and tell them about his medication, to no avail. Three days before he was taken to the hospital, he was telling the prison authorities that he needed to go to the prison clinic, and they told him, "Wait and we will take you." In another testimony, an eyewitness said that prisoners knocked on the door demanding that Hasan be taken to the clinic. He was sad and was crying because of the pain; however, these requests for help were ignored by the Dry Dock authorities. They went on to confirm that Hasan AbdulNabi did not receive the medication prescribed to him and that repeated

requests for medical care by both Hasan AbdulNabi and his fellow prisoners were ignored, “we called the police and reported a case of sickle cell anemia and the need to go to the clinic, but they did not take him.”

The Bahraini police summoned Hasan AbdulNabi to AlHoora Police Station at 9:00 a.m. on 7 July 2021. No reason was given for his arrest. He was convicted in absentia and sentenced to three months in prison on drug-related charges. At the time of his arrest, he was unfit to begin his sentence and was instead taken to the hospital. He was released from the Salmaniya Medical Complex on 14 July 2021 and was transferred to Dry Dock Prison.

Despite being eligible for an alternative sentence and suffering from a serious health condition, Hasan AbdulNabi was not given an alternative sentence. He was sent to the Dry Dock Prison Clinic on 19 July, the day of Eid Al-Adha, before being returned to Salmaniya Medical Complex on the same day, where he later died.

### **17 April attack on Jau Prison Building 13**

On Saturday, 17 April 2021, riot police assaulted prisoners in Building 13 of Jau Prison and violently attacked at least 35 prisoners for protesting poor prison conditions. Shortly after the attack, Bahrain's Ministry of Interior issued a statement declaring that "security and legal measures were taken against the prisoners, as they were involved in chaos and violence against police personnel". On 18 April, The National Institution for Human Rights, a quasi-governmental monitoring body, denied all allegations that prisoners were being mistreated and indicated that allegations raised about prisoners being beaten and taken to an unknown location is incorrect.

According to an eyewitness, the attack began after prisoners from Cells 3 and 8 of Ward 2 of the building staged a sit-in in the corridors of the prison, refusing to return to their cells. The attack was said to have been led by senior police officers Captain Ahmad AlAmadi and Captain Mohamed AbdulHameed and was captured by surveillance cameras and recordings made by riot police. In addition to being beaten, a number of prisoners were reportedly thrown on their faces. One prisoner, Sayed Alawi AlWadaei, lost consciousness after sustaining a deep head wound and is said to have bled profusely. Another prisoner, Saeed AbdulEmam, was seen being taken away by the police. The current status and whereabouts of these individuals were unknown: their family members were not able to contact them, and the prison authorities refused to disclose any information about them or their whereabouts.

More than a dozen family members of political prisoners, some of whom were injured in the attack, went to the prison in an attempt to locate their imprisoned relatives. Despite a promise that they would be allowed to call within two days, the parents reported that their children had not been allowed to make phone calls.

Prisoners protested poor prison conditions and the punitive measures taken in Buildings 12, 13, and 14, including confinement to their cells 24 hours a day, stopping of phone calls, and overcrowding in prison cells.

### **Ashura: Failed attempts by the Ministry of Interior to whitewash violations of religious freedom**

The Ashura commemorations in August 2021 were marred with double standards from the Bahraini authorities. There were strict restrictions placed on services and celebrations surround Ashura, while the basketball finals went ahead with packed stadiums. On Bahraini state media, there was little focus on the holy commemorations and an emphasis on the videos from the basketball game, where none of the recently announced restrictions were being followed. Furthermore, the son of King Nasser Bin Hamad Al Khalifa appeared in Bahraini media during the month of Muharram, celebrating the Indian Onam festival with the Indian diaspora in Bahrain. They practiced their rituals amid the meeting of a large number of people and the absence of the slightest precautionary measures. It is important to note that the month of Muharram and the commemoration ceremonies of Ashura are particularly sacred to the Shia community as they mourn the 12 imams. The explicit disrespect for this sacred time coincides with the continuous discrimination against the Shia community in Bahrain.

The restrictions affected even the simplest manifestations of participation in the Ashura commemoration. We will review the most prominent violations that occurred in parallel with the whitewashing methods adopted by the authorities, especially the Ministry of Interior's claims of embodying what it called "community partnership in its finest form" in a statement where it congratulated all its administrations on the success of the Ashura season in cooperation with those in charge of the Ma'tams:

- **Removal of black flags and banners**

With the end of the Ashura commemoration, King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa tried to cover the violations committed by the security services to restrict the commemoration of Ashura, by describing the level of commemoration as "striving from Bahraini uniqueness in its cohesive social fabric and coexistence in peace and harmony, which will remain in its civilized model ... a humanitarian reference in the exercise of freedoms religious and religious pluralism". King Hamad's position on the cohesive social fabric coexisting in peace and harmony is completely incompatible with the removal of the black flags that Shia Muslims are used to raising every year to express their grief over the martyrdom of the Prophet Mohamed's grandson. Thus, it falls within the violations that began with the week preceding the month of Muharram, when the Bahraini Ministry of Interior made phone calls to a number of citizens asking them to remove the black flags from over their houses and asking them to sign a pledge not to raise the Ashura flags on their roofs. Three days later, the security



services began photographing the homes that were flying flags in a number of areas, including Abu Saiba and Al-Shakhoura.

The organization also monitored the arrest of a group of young men in Duraz while they were raising black banners and signs. They were transferred to the Budaiya police station and were released hours after the arrest. In protest against this systematic restriction, a number of Bahrainis demonstrated a few days before the beginning of the month of Muharram, rejecting the systematic sectarian targeting against Ashura rituals.

With the approach of the first day of Muharram, a series of attacks on Ashura manifestations were recorded in the Western Region, Duraz, Al-Malikiyah, Al-Bilad Al-Qadeem and Damistan, in addition to the presence of armored vehicles and military vehicles that removed all the banners raised above the houses, squares, streets, and in the neighborhoods. The administration of the Jabla AlHabshi Ma'tam was forced to remove a sign bearing the famous phrase of Imam Hussein.

On the fifth day of Muharram, black flags and banners were removed from Hamad Town, the Fourth Roundabout. Pictures and videos of masked civilian men pulling black flags off balconies and rooftops without the owners' permission were also published. During the mourning processions, the security authorities decided on the sixth day of Muharram to prevent the central procession from starting in Salmabad, and to limit the funeral processions to the surroundings of the funerals only. As a result, authorities contacted the administrations of the Ma'tams in Salmabad to force them not to hold usual mourning processions and to limit the religious rites to the vicinity of the funerals only as a pretext to combat the spread of the Coronavirus, and the same thing was done in the Karzakan procession.

- **Intensified security presence in the streets and violation of privacy**

With the advent of the month of Muharram and the opening of the funerals, the governor of the capital, Hisham Bin Abdul Rahman Al Khalifa, visited on 11 August a number of the capital's Ma'tams and met their heads and those in charge of them. This was also preceded by increased visits from law enforcement officials to different areas in a whitewashing campaign to cover-up the violations of religious freedoms practiced. Although authorities came to praise "the coordination and cooperation shown by the heads of Ma'tams and Husainiya processions in the governorate with the concerned authorities in order to make the Ashura season a success", this did not reflect positively on the behavior of the security services that dealt with the Ashura ceremony as a serious security incident. They practiced legal harassment against the worshippers and committed violations of religious freedoms that had nothing to do with the measures to combat the Coronavirus.

Some areas witnessed the arrest of dozens of mourners in the streets and requests for their IDs. Also monitored were cases of attempted provocation by security forces toward mourners, filming them while they

were adhering to the utmost restraint and ignoring the provocations. Police patrols in the village of A'ali were wiretapping homes with the aim of seeking to punish the families who held mourning processions, and pictures and videos of drone that the authorities used to photograph participants and mourners also circulated.

At the procession in Salmabad, on the sixth of Muharram, the security forces prevented mourners from outside the area from entering the town, and their license plate numbers were registered, and their IDs photographed. The scene is not much different in the Jabla Habshi Ma'tam, where forces affiliated with the Ministry of the Interior set up a checkpoint near the Ma'tam, under the pretext of monitoring the implementation of the measures taken to prevent the Coronavirus. The presence of civilian forces affiliated with the Ministry of Interior was also monitored in Sanabis, Sitra, Samaheej, Juffair, Al-Bilad Al-Qadeem, Abu Saiba and Al-Shakhoura.

- **A series of summonses and arrests**

On 19 August, the official media published pictures under the title "The relevant security departments of the Ministry of Interior record a distinguished presence and high professional performance in securing and making the Ashura season a success." However, they missed the series of summons that took place during the first ten days of Muharram on several charges, one of which was non-compliance with the precautionary measures to combat Coronavirus as well as other charges related to the practice of Ashura rituals, most of which were monitored:

- Summoning citizens from different regions as a result of raising black flags over their homes
- Two Maddahs, Mahmood Al-Kallaf and Saleh Sahwan, were summoned to AlHoora police station, and they were released after paying a fine of 200 Bahraini dinars.
- Various regions witnessed large numbers of summons and fines on the pretext of illegal assembly and not adhering to preventive measures to limit the spread of the Coronavirus.
- Several citizens received phone summons for questioning at the 17 Roundabout police station without knowing the reasons.
- Seven mourners and the Maddahs were arrested in Sanabis, and many were summoned for raising the Ashura banners. They were asked to remove them and hand them over to the police station.
- The arrest of the two young men, Ali Mansoor and Mohamed Deif, after they were summoned for interrogation at AlHoora Police Station.
- The Bahraini Ministry of Interior summoned Sheikh Abdul Mohsen Mulla Atiya Al-Jamri and Sheikh Mohamed Al-Riyash for interrogation at the Muharraaq Police Station.
- Mostafa Al-Hoori was summoned by the Roundabout 17 police station in Hamad Town and was detained for two days on charges of participating in an unauthorized mourning in Hamad Town and participating in a gathering of more than 5 people. He was forced to pay a fine of 200 Bahraini dinars.
- Maddah Jaafar Al-Dirazi was arrested after being summoned to the Budaiya police station, and he was later released.

- The arrest of the head of the Ma'tam of Imam Ali in the village of Al-Dair, Haj Fadhel Hammad, after he was summoned. He was later released.
- Summoning members of the Ma'tam al-Muqsha administration to Budaiya police station and threatening them to take measures if a mourning procession is held.
- The arrest of the head of the AlDair processions council, Faisal Al-Momen, after he was summoned.
- Maddah Sayed Ahmed Al-Alawi was summoned to the Samaheej police station for his participation in the Dair Zanjil procession.
- Summoning the preachers Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Khadran and Sheikh Hani Al-Banna, while the reasons for the summons were not clear.
- Maddah Mahdi Sahwan was summoned to the Roundabout 17 police station, and he was arrested for hours and interrogated in connection with the publication of one of the Ma'tams (Ma'tam Al-Markh), a recording of an Ashura poem he had recited and then released.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The year 2021 carried with it many flagrant violations of human rights in Bahrain, essentially coinciding with the outbreak of the Coronavirus, especially inside prisons. The virus was enough to reveal authorities' failure to deal with the crisis which they were unable to control, leading to a torrent of obscuring and whitewashing campaigns carried out by the authorities through their official media. Moreover, the Ashura season also included attempts to whitewash the violations under the pretext of the Coronavirus. On the other hand, political prisoners were deprived, as in previous years, of their most basic rights. Despite the release of a number of political prisoners within the alternative sentencing law, prominent opposition leaders are still behind bars, suffering from deteriorating health conditions, especially Dr. Abdul-Jalil al-Singace, who is still on a hunger strike to protest the confiscation of his research and ill-treatment. In view of the continuous violations that the Bahraini authorities have not hesitated to cover up before Western countries, **ADHRB** recommends the following:

- Urging Western countries, especially Bahrain's allies such as the United States and the United Kingdom, to exert serious pressure on the Bahraini government to unconditionally release political prisoners, especially opposition leaders.
- Commitment to apply alternative penal law in line with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules).
- Holding the Ministry of Interior and official institutions such as the Ombudsman and the National Institution for Human Rights responsible for the deteriorating prison conditions (Dry Dock and Jau Prisons), medical neglect, and deprivation of the most basic rights that prisoners suffer from.
- Ending the policy of impunity and holding those responsible accountable for all violations.