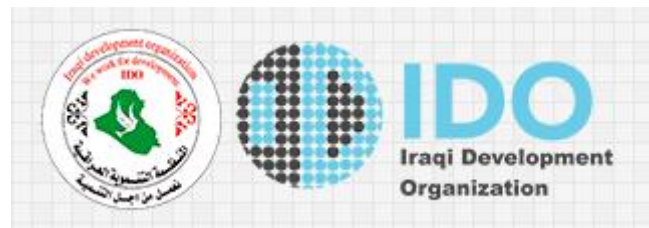




Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain



Iraqi Development Organization (IDO)

Contribution to the 71st session of the Committee of the Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

Bahrain: Lack of Self-Determination and Political Rights

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Table of Contents

About Us	3
Foreword	3
Introduction	3-4
I. Right to Self-Determination	4-8
II. Right to Physical and Mental Health	8-11
III. Right to Adequate Standard of Living	11-14
Conclusion and Recommendations	14-15

About Us

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Washington DC, accredited as a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC). ADHRB works to foster awareness of, and support for, democracy and human rights in Bahrain and the broader Gulf region. Iraqi Development Organization (IDO) is a non-profit organization with offices in Iraq and UK, accredited as a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC). IDO works on variety issues related to women and children and especially in the field of mental health and wellbeing.

Foreword

This report will focus on Bahrain's implementation of three rights outlined in the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) to which the country became a signatory in 2007.¹ After a short introduction, we will first explore Article 1(1), the right of self-determination, before moving onto Article 12(1), the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and finally a discussion of Article 11(1), the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living. Finally, the report will conclude with a brief discussion of the findings and a number of recommendations.

Introduction

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a small Middle Eastern island country situated in the Arab Gulf between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, with Iran located approximately 140 miles (230 kilometers) to the north. Bahrain's political system is that of a constitutional, hereditary monarchy. The head of state, King Hamad Bin Isa al-Khalifa, appoints a cabinet consisting of 24 ministers, 12 of which are family members. The King holds ultimate authority over political decisions and appoints the head of government, the prime minister, who is not constitutionally required to be a member of parliament. Parliament is comprised of an appointed upper house, the Shura Council (a consultative body), and the elected Council of Representatives, each with 40 seats. Two formerly prominent opposition societies, *Wa'ad* and *al-Wefaq* are no longer able to participate due to a court-ordered dissolution in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Since 2012, and more broadly since the 2011 pro-democracy movement, the Bahraini government has intensified its campaign against peaceful dissent, imposing severe restrictions on basic human rights, including the fundamental right to self-determination.

Worryingly, authorities have also targeted medical personnel, either for their political opinions or for treating injured protestors in the wake of the 2011 demonstrations. Medical impartiality as a tenet has been routinely disregarded and has resulted in declining healthcare standards. This is especially true for the country's largest healthcare facility, the Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC), which was occupied by security forces. The government has been criticized for its interference in the work of medical personnel, for the execution of torture and forced disappearances while in custody, and for the denial of medical treatment to political detainees; all of which pertain to the full realization of the right to health.

¹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner – *Ratification Status Dashboard*. Available at: <https://indicators.ohchr.org/> [Accessed: 18/08/2020]

Regarding Bahrain's *Bidoon* (stateless) communities, rights groups have raised several issues and reported various types of discrimination.² As nationality is an inherent human right, being born stateless in Bahrain is in itself a human rights abuse. Lack of citizenship can result in a multitude of other human rights violations across a wide spectrum, restricting liberties and opportunities afforded to other citizens. In addition to *Bidoon*, a large number of Bahrain's Shia and *Ajam* (Bahraini Shia of Persian descent) suffer longstanding forms of institutionalized discrimination. The government's failure to resolve the situation has both created and protracted a number of serious issues facing these communities, leaving thousands of people in precarious legal situations, and violating basic obligations under the ICESCR.

I. The Right of Self-Determination

The right to self-determination – the ability of people to determine their political status and pursue economic, social, and cultural development – has been enshrined as a universal and fundamental human right.³ In practice, this operates in tandem with other fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression, assembly, and association. The denial of these associated rights is often accompanied by the rejection of the right to self-determination, resulting in oppression and discrimination. The desire for the right to self-determination, can emerge from an internal context, as in the case of Bahrain, where a majority finds themselves oppressed by a minority government in their own country. As a constitutional monarchy, the ruling Sunni Al-Khalifa family has the final say over all aspects of the citizens' economic, social, and cultural life. This has raised serious concerns within the majority Shia population, who are compounded by well-documented electoral irregularities and gerrymandering, rendering the political system far from representative.⁴

Due to the gerrymandering of electoral districts, the influence of Bahrain's Shia majority population is severely diluted. Polling district lines have historically been a longstanding point of unresolved contention amongst the now-illegal political opposition. Electoral districts vary in size with the largest districts containing an electorate several times more voluminous than the smallest district. Consequently, the votes of many who are not pro-government have structurally less weight in the electoral process. While the pro-government, mainly Sunni affiliated population, is a minority, the delineation of voting districts is shaped in such a way that ensures that Shia opposition cannot obtain a majority in parliament. This underrepresentation of the Shia population critically undermined the validity of the 2014 and 2018 elections. Additionally, the mass naturalization of Sunni foreigners and the mass importation of Sunni voters from Saudi Arabia have further curtailed the capacity of the Shia population to make their voices heard.⁵

² Human Rights Commission United States Congress - *Bahrain 2018 Human Rights Report*. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BAHRAIN-2018.pdf> [Accessed: 20/08/20]

³ United Nations General Assembly. *Resolution 1514 (XV) – Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*. (G.A.Res.15/1514 – 14 December 1960). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Independence.aspx> [Accessed 24/08/20]

⁴ BBC World News (2002). *Bahrain Election*. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6172482.stm [Accessed: 24/08/20]

Reuters World News (2010). *Factbox: Bahrain's Parliamentary Election*. Available at: ____ [Accessed: 24/08/20]

The Washington Post (2014). *Electoral Rules and Threats Cure Bahrain's Sectarian Parliament*. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/12/01/electoral-rules-and-threats-cure-bahrains-sectarian-parliament/?arc404=true> [Accessed 24/08/20]

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) and Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) (2015). *Apart in Their Own Land: Government Discrimination Against Shia in Bahrain (Vol.1)*. Available at: https://adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ADHRB_Apart-in-Their-Own-Land_web.pdf [Accessed: 24/08/20]

⁵ Gengler, J. (2015). *Group Conflict and Political Mobilization in Bahrain and the Arab Gulf: Rethinking the Rentier State*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Electoral bias not only erodes Bahrain's democratic process and stands in contravention to Article 1(1) of the ICESCR and Article 21(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which ensures the right to fair and genuine elections, but also works to generally undermine trust in the political system. This has built considerable levels of frustration and political disengagement among the Shia population, thus reducing the overall Shia voter turnout, further endangering democracy in the Kingdom. Additionally, in an unpopular move, the government has disallowed independent election monitors and impartial observers, whose job is to ensure fair elections and highlight irregularities, bad practices, or fraudulent activity.

Article 4 of the Bahraini Constitution states that "freedom, equality, security, trust, knowledge, social solidarity and equality of opportunity for citizens are pillars of society guaranteed by the State." However, since the pro-democracy demonstrations in 2011 and increasingly since 2017, government actions have not reflected the above stipulations. The Government of Bahrain has passed several laws (including Public Gatherings Law of 1973, Amendments to the Public Gatherings Law of 1973 -Law 32/2006, Law of Protecting Society from Terrorist Acts of 2006, Law of Association of 1989 - Law 21/1989, Press Law of 2002, Amendments to the Bahraini Penal Code - Law 1/2014) that restrict the exercise of free speech, association, and assembly. This has been both exacerbated and reinforced with overly broad anti-terror legislation in 2014, further constricting the space for free expression.⁶

As political criticism is increasingly criminalized by the legislative apparatus, the ability of citizens to take part in the political process and hence their right to self-determination is acutely inhibited. This stands in contravention to both Article 1(1) and Article 2(1) of the Covenant, and directly violates Article 19 of the UDHR. The definitions of crimes or unlawful activity under Bahrain's anti-terror legislation have been widely condemned as undefined and non-specific. Many legitimate civil activities are thus considered unlawful, which not only makes them inconsistent with Bahrain's constitutional principles, in particular explicitly non-derogable basic rights and freedoms,⁷ but also dramatically out of line with international comparative laws.⁸ As a terrorist act in Bahrain can include anything deemed to be disruptive towards the Kingdom or government authorities, or merely damaging to national unity, the danger to democratic society is vast.⁹ These loose concepts are undefined by other Bahrain laws, and as such, are free to be interpreted by the judiciary or public prosecution without oversight, often leading to the dramatic characterization of offenses as terrorist acts.

In a similar vein, Law No. (60) on Information Technology Crimes, passed in 2014, revised earlier anti-cybercrime legislation from 2006 and 2013, adding citizenship revocation as a penalty.¹⁰ This not only stands in direct violation of Article 15(1) and (2) of the UDHR regarding the right to citizenship, but also further constrains freedom of expression. As of January 2020, internet penetration in the country stood at 99%, with social media penetration at 84%, placing Bahrain among the foremost countries in the world for

⁶ The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (2018). *Terrorising People by the Law of Terrorism*. Available at: <http://www.bahrainrights.org/sites/default/files/Terrorizing%20people%20by%20the%20Law%20of%20Terrorism-INTERACTIVE.pdf> [Accessed 24/08/20]

⁷ Comparative Constitutions Project (2016). *Bahrain's Constitution of 2002 with Amendments through 2012*. Available at: <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/bah117079.pdf> [Accessed 26/08/20]

⁸ Most notably Article 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx> [Accessed 07/10/20]

⁹ Bahrain Rulebook [Article No.1 The Law of Protection of the Community Against Terrorist Acts] (2006). *Law No. 58 of 2006 with Respect to the Protection of the Community Against Terrorist Acts*. Available at: http://menarights.org/sites/default/files/2016-11/BHR_Anti-Terrorism_2006_EN.pdf [Accessed: 24/08/20]

¹⁰ [8] Joyce Hakmeh (2018). *Cybercrime Legislation in the GCC countries: Fit for Purpose?* Chatham House International Security Department. Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-07-04-cybercrime-legislation-gcc-hakmeh.pdf> [Accessed: 08/10/20]

connectivity.¹¹ However, clampdowns on the internet as a medium have therefore become an increasing concern to the country. Only a week before the December 2018 elections, the authorities arrested a former member of parliament, Rashed al-Asheeri, as his tweets were deemed “critical of the country’s upcoming parliamentary elections.”¹² In May 2019, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) tweeted that “those who follow inciting accounts that promote sedition and circulate their posts will be held legally accountable.”¹³ These new laws have translated into the suppression of any material online that may be deemed critical. For example, in January 2020, blogger and historian Jassim Al-Abbas complained that a picture of a historical mosque was deleted from both his Instagram account and blog. He also mentioned a Bahraini ruler preceding the al-Khalifa era online. As a result, Al-Abbas was arrested and charged with publishing wrongful information. In the same month, a number of Twitter users were arrested for posting tweets that condemned the assassination of Qasem Soleimani and were only released after they deleted the posts.¹⁴

The National Democratic Action Society, also known as *Wa’ad*, Bahrain’s formerly largest secular leftist opposition group were also targeted. In 2017, after *Wa’ad* described Bahrain as experiencing “constitutional political crises,” the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs (MOJ) began dissolution proceedings against them. The MOJ cited unsubstantiated allegations of “incitement of acts of terrorism and promoting violent and forceful overthrow of the political regime.”¹⁵ Two weeks later officials charged the group’s leader, Ebrahim Sharif, with both “inciting hatred against the regime” and “factions in society” under Articles 165 and 172 of the Bahraini Penal Code.¹⁶ A full dissolution and asset seizure was ordered and upheld by the Court of Cassation in January 2019.¹⁷ The MOJ did not provide evidence of its accusations. The forceful restrictions both on individual internet users and political organisations are in clear violation of Article 19 of the UDHR, which grants the freedom to “hold opinions without interference” and to “seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media.” The actions of the government present a campaign of fear against peaceful dissent and a systematic dismantling of the country’s independent political space.

In March 2017, the Shura Council approved amendments to Article 105(b) of the Constitution which would allow civilians to be tried in military courts in cases of terrorism offenses. However, as previously discussed, the loosely defined concept of terrorism is used as a mechanism to counter political dissent. This not only contravenes the spirit of Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) recommendation 1720, which proposed the transfer of civilian cases to civilian courts instead of military courts, but also violates Article 10 of the UDHR, which is meant to secure “a fair public hearing”. Additionally, further structural obstacles prevent the realization of the right to self-determination. Law by Decree n°14 of 2002 on the exercise of political rights disallows anyone who has served six months or more in prison from holding office. This is problematic given that there is an estimated figure of 4,000 political prisoners currently imprisoned. This

¹¹ Statista (2020) *Countries with the highest internet penetration rate as of January 2020*. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/227082/countries-with-the-highest-internet-penetration-rate/> [Available at: 26/10/20]

¹² ADHRB (2018). *As Expected, Bahrain’s Parliamentary Elections Were Neither Free Nor Fair*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2018/11/as-expected-bahrains-parliamentary-elections-were-neither-free-nor-fair/> [Accessed 26/08/20]

¹³ Ministry of Interior Tweet. Available at: https://twitter.com/moi_bahrain/status/1134148380312178689

¹⁴ Freedom House (2020). *Freedom on the Net 2020: Overview of Bahrain*. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bahrain/freedom-net/2020> [Accessed 07/10/20]

¹⁵ ADHRB (2017). *Bahraini government moves to dissolve leading secular, leftist opposition society Wa’ad*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2017/03/bahraini-government-moves-dissolve-leading-secular-leftist-opposition-society-waad/> [Accessed: 10/09/2020]

¹⁶ ADHRB (2017). *Bahrain: Political Opposition Leader Ebrahim Sharif Charged With Inciting Hatred*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2017/03/12050/> [Accessed: 10/09/20]

¹⁷ Amnesty International (2019). *Bahrain: Court upholds unlawful dissolution of major opposition political group*. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/01/bahrain-court-upholds-unlawful-dissolution-of-major-opposition-political-group/> [Accessed: 09/09/2020]

includes Sheikh Ali Salman, leader of *al-Wefaq*, a now-dissolved major opposition party, who was sentenced to life in prison weeks before elections on spurious charges of ‘espionage’ dating back to 2011.¹⁸

The systematic persecution of political opponents eliminates public debate, which in principle is essential to the fulfillment of the right of self-determination. This is exacerbated by the forceful repression of non-violent demonstrations and the numerous human rights violations inflicted on peaceful political opponents. By claiming the sole voice on Bahrain’s economic, political and social affairs together, alongside the imposition of restrictions on those who oppose the government, the majority of Bahrain’s population is left voiceless and stripped of agency. Moreover, it is not simply that the majority of Bahrain’s population have no say in the direction of the country, it is that those who attempt to participate in the discussion face a slew of consequences including intimidation, legal penalties, violence, torture, denaturalization, imprisonment, and even death. The systematic practice of torture is used against political opponents to coerce statements of guilt and impose heavy prison sentences. Although Article 208 of the Bahraini Penal code firmly stands against this, the coercion of statements by means of torture is a widespread practice acknowledged and condemned by the UN as clear violations of Article 5 of the UDHR.¹⁹

The criminalization of various forms of expression, including the right to participate meaningfully in the political process, not only contravenes important principles of the ICESCR, but also the Vienna Program and Declaration of Action which recognizes the right of people to take legitimate action to exercise their right to self-determination.²⁰ On November 24 and December 1, 2018, the Government of Bahrain held elections for the lower house of parliament. These constituted the second set of elections since the mass protests of 2011, the first set being held in late 2014. The elections faced heavy criticism from human rights organisations,²¹ members of the European Parliament, members of the US Congress, and members of the British, Irish, and Italian parliaments.²² The constrictions placed on opposition societies, targeting of opposition leaders, absence of independent media and censorship, political manipulation and gerrymandering, violation of the one-person-one-vote principle, as well as restrictions on the freedom of expression, association, and assembly have rendered the validity of elections severely compromised.

In Bahrain’s Third Cycle Universal Period Review, the government supported a number of recommendations concerning national politics (114.56, 114.97, 114.101, 114.109, 114.116, 114.122, and 114.123), including the halting of persecutory action towards political opposition, and ensuring the right to assemble, form

¹⁸ Sheikh Ali Salman was charged with espionage by working with Qatar to overthrow the Bahraini government in 2011. These charges have attracted widespread criticism and have been dismissed by human rights groups as a crackdown on dissent with Amnesty International describing the sentence in no uncertain terms as a “travesty of justice that demonstrates the Bahraini authorities’ relentless and unlawful efforts to silence any form of dissent”. Sheikh Ali Salman communicated with Qatar with the knowledge of the Bahraini government and the support of the US government as the neighbouring Gulf state was expected to play a mediating role between the opposition and the Bahraini government following the protests. Amnesty International (2018) Bahrain: Opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman unlawfully convicted. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/bahrain-opposition-leader-sheikh-ali-salman-unlawfully-convicted/> [Accessed: 31/08/20].

¹⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (1976). *Bahrain Penal Code, 1976*. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/res/cld/document/bhr/1976/bahrain_penal_code_html/Bahrain_Penal_Code_1976.pdf [Accessed 07/10/20]

²⁰ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner - *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (25 June 1993)*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/vienna.aspx> [Accessed 26/08/20]

²¹ Human Rights Watch (2018). *Bahrain: No Free Elections in the Current Environment*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/20/bahrain-no-free-elections-current-environment#> [Accessed: 26/08/20]

Amnesty International (2018). *Bahrain: Suppression of Opposition Ahead of Bahraini Elections*. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/9440/2018/en/> [Accessed 26/08/20]

²² For the hyperlinks to the letters sent by these members to Bahrain please see: ADHRB (2018). *As Expected, Bahrain’s Parliamentary Elections Were Neither Free Nor Fair*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2018/11/as-expected-bahrain-parliamentary-elections-were-neither-free-nor-fair/> [Accessed 26/08/20]

political associations and participate in politics remains unimpeded.²³ The Bahraini Constitution also accords political rights “including the right to vote and to stand for elections” (Article 1(e)). However, in reality, the opposition was effectively barred from participating. The major opposition societies remained forcibly dissolved, with further legislation banning anyone who has formerly belonged to one of these political groups from running for office.²⁴ Both of these actions were in direct breach of Articles 20(1) and 21(1) of the UDHR.

Article 1(3) of the ICESCR states that signatories to the Covenant “shall promote the realization of the right of self-determination, and shall respect that right, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.” Articles 1, 55, 73, and 76 of the United Nations Charter call upon all signatory states to ensure the right of self-determination to their populations, through the inclusion of all people in the political process.²⁵ It is quite clear that the Government of Bahrain is very much opposed to this. While the government denies holding political prisoners, they have conducted a systematic campaign of imprisoning members of opposition societies, spreading fear against political dissent, and closing down the public debate in the political sphere. This shows that the government is actively working to prevent the right of self-determination from being realized in the country.

II. The Right of Physical and Mental Health

According to Article 12(1) of the ICESCR, everyone in Bahrain has the right to the highest achievable standards of physical and mental health. However, due to political reasons, this right is not respected in practice. Health facilities suffer from militarization and chronic poor management, affecting both patients and professionals alike. Moreover, in direct contradiction to the above article, political prisoners face cruel and inhuman treatment in the form of physical and psychological torture, with many recorded cases of inmates being denied medical attention.

Since 2011 the condition of public health has sharply declined.²⁶ Hospitals, especially Bahrain’s largest and most important medical facility the Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC), have become a target of security forces. The SMC has suffered deliberate obstruction and intimidation of medical personnel, purposefully intended to worsen the conditions of injured demonstrators. Both during, and in the aftermath of the unrest, medical professionals were disappeared, dismissed, and prosecuted. They suffered systematic torture and imprisonment as a consequence of the impartial assistance they offered to injured protesters. This is in breach of Article 8(a) of the Bahraini Constitution, which grants the right of every citizen to healthcare; Article 2(2) of the Covenant, which provides for the right to health without political discrimination; and Article 25(1) of the UDHR, which specifies that the right to health is inalienable and independent from the political opinion.

²³ United Nations Human Rights Council (2017). *Universal Periodic Review – Bahrain*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/BHindex.aspx> [Accessed: 26/08/20]

²⁴ Political parties are banned in Bahrain however factions organize as functionally equivalent ‘political societies.’

²⁵ United Nations (1945). *The Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*. Available at: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CTC/uncharter.pdf> [Accessed 07/10/20]

²⁶ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy and Bahrain Center for Human Rights (2017). *Bahrain’s Third Cycle UPR: A record of repression*. Available at: https://usercontent.one/wp/www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017.2.28_Web-Version_ADHRB_BCHR_BIRD_Bahrain-3rd-Cycle-UPR-Assessment.pdf [Accessed: 28/08/20]

As a by-product of militarization and mismanagement, medical errors were the third leading cause of death in the country in 2017.²⁷ In a 2015 survey, 94% of respondents perceived there to be a degradation in the quality of treatment in the SMC.²⁸ In that same year, three patients diagnosed with infectious diseases were placed alongside pregnant women due to a lack of isolation rooms. Overcrowding is a persistent issue. The SMC receives an average of 950-1050 patients every day, with its upper-limit capacity approximately 1000 patients. Due to a lack of space, hospital beds have spilled out of their designated placement and become permanent fixtures of the hallways. At the same time, a high number of nurses were transferred from their area of expertise to other fields, consequently increasing the frequency of medical errors. In response to the shortage of medical personnel post-2011, the Ministry of Health (MOH) began hiring medical staff from abroad. In 2017, they represented approximately 20% of doctors at the SMC. Unfortunately, they often lack medical qualifications, skills, and workable knowledge of the Arabic language.

The militarization of Bahrain has taken place through the transfer of the administration of public health facilities from the Ministry of Health (MOH) to the military. For example, this has left the control of ambulance services to the Ministry of Interior (MOI). Moreover, the presence of security forces in hospitals interferes with the provision of treatment. Four hundred cameras have been installed inside the SMC by the MOI, serving as both a materialization of surveillance powers and as a reminder of the grave implications of providing medical treatment to political opponents. MOI employees have also been documented systematically interrogating both medical staff and patients in violation of Article 7(b) of the Covenant.²⁹ As a consequence of both falling standards and a militarized atmosphere of fear, citizens are understandably more reluctant to go to the hospital. This of course causes greater health problems, as illnesses or injuries left untreated and unchecked are more likely to become debilitating or life-threatening.

The situation is even more complicated for Bahrain's stateless Bidoon community, especially Bidoon women, as their legal status renders them ineligible for state-supported healthcare.³⁰ This is a dangerous form of discrimination, which increases both maternal and infant mortality rates due to the lack of access to antenatal and postnatal care, as well as delivery assistance.³¹ As such, both mother and child are more likely to suffer from health-related complications, a direct violation of Article 12(1) and (2a) of the Covenant. As Bahrain's domestic citizenship legislation is in breach of international law, there remains severe consequences to the health of the Bidoon community. The psychological stress stemming from their precarious legal situation and consequent low socio-economic status, has translated into suicide rates among the Bidoon community that exceed the national average. The documented cases of young men committing suicide after being unable to provide legal credentials for employment demonstrate the direct repercussions of the situation upon their mental health.

²⁷ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy and Bahrain Center for Human Rights (2017). *Bahrain's Third Cycle UPR: A record of repression*. Available at: https://usercontent.one/wp/www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017.2.28_Web-Version_ADHRB_BCHR_BIRD_Bahrain-3rd-Cycle-UPR-Assessment.pdf [Accessed 27/10/20]

²⁸ Al-Wasat News (2015) *Al-Wasat Vote: 94% of participants say services of SMC declined*. Available at: <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1042365.html> [Accessed 27/10/20]

²⁹ Physicians for Human Rights (2012). *Under the Gun: Ongoing Assaults on Bahrain's Health System*. Available at: <https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Bahrain-militarization-may-2012-under-the-gun.pdf> [Accessed: 07/10/20]

³⁰ The Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion and Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (2019). *Joint Submission to the Human Rights Council at the 27th Session of the Universal Periodic Review*. Available at: file:///C:/Users/Cinti/Downloads/JS10_UPR27_BHR_E_Main.pdf [Accessed: 06/09/20]

³¹ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (2017). *Bidoon women may face greater risk due to lack of state-sponsored healthcare protections*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2017/03/bidoon-women-may-face-greater-risk-due-lack-state-sponsored-healthcare-protections/> [Accessed 07/09/20]

Political prisoners form another group of individuals repeatedly denied proper medical treatment. International organisations have often criticized the treatment of incarcerated political opposition,³² whose problems are compounded by poor prison conditions which fail to meet international standards. Jau Prison, the largest male prison in Bahrain, has a maximum population capacity of 1201, but in 2017, held 2700 inmates.³³ Children are forced to share crowded unsanitary prison cells and toilet facilities with adults.³⁴ Furthermore, prison healthcare facilities, when available, are woefully ill-equipped and largely unprepared to deal with emergency situations, in violation of Article 12(2)(d) of the Covenant. The outbreak of COVID-19 has posed an even greater threat to older inmates and those with underlying health issues. As such, prison conditions are also in contravention to Article 12(2)(c), which obliges prison authorities to prevent and control cases of epidemics and other diseases.

Bahraini authorities also fail to cooperate with international human rights mechanisms. Bahrain denied access to Juan Mendez, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture in 2013, and have since continued to postpone the visits.³⁵ In 2018 the UN Secretary-General raised concerns regarding inhuman prison conditions, citing Hajer Mansoor, Najah Yusuf, and Medina Ali as examples. Soon after the report was published, the three women faced retaliation by prison authorities including physical beatings, solitary confinement, and the denial of phone calls.³⁶ A number of political inmates such as Abduljalil Al-Singace,³⁷ Hassan Mushaima,³⁸ Husain Abdul Aziz Mohamed³⁹ are all in dire need of medical attention which has been routinely denied.⁴⁰

³² Amnesty International (2019). *Bahrain: Denial of medical care for seriously ill imprisoned activist 'latest act of cruelty'*. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/09/bahrain-denial-of-medical-care-for-seriously-ill-imprisoned-activist-latest-act-of-cruelty/> [Accessed: 07/09/20]

³³ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy and Bahrain Center for Human Rights (2015). *Inside Jau: Government Brutality in Bahrain's Central Prison*. Available at: https://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Inside-Jau-Report_Final.pdf [Accessed: 18/08/20]

³⁴ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy (2015). *Child prisoners in Bahrain*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2015/02/child-prisoners-in-bahrain/> [Accessed: 04/10/20]

³⁵ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (2020). *HRC43 Written Statement: Bahrain's refusal to cooperate with the UN and its mechanism*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2020/02/hrc43-written-statement-bahrains-refusal-to-cooperate-with-the-un-and-its-mechanisms/> [Accessed: 14/10/20]

³⁶ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (2018). *ADHRB and NGOs Send Letter to UN High Commissioner on Conditions in Bahrain's Isa Town Prison for Women*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2018/10/adhrb-and-ngos-send-letter-to-un-high-commissioner-on-conditions-in-bahrains-isa-town-prison-for-women/> [Accessed: 14/10/20]

³⁷ Abdul Jalil al-Singace is serving a life sentence. He suffers from numerous ailments such as post-polio syndrome which the authorities use against him. Amnesty International (2019). *Bahrain: Denial of medical care for seriously ill imprisoned activist 'latest act of cruelty'*. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/09/bahrain-denial-of-medical-care-for-seriously-ill-imprisoned-activist-latest-act-of-cruelty/> [Accessed: 07/09/20]

³⁸ Hassan Mushaima is a 70-year-old political prisoner who is serving a life sentence in Jau Prison. His health continues to deteriorate without access to proper medical care. Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (2018). *Profiles in persecution: Hassan Mushaima*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2018/08/profiles-in-persecution-hassan-mushaima/> [Accessed: 07/09/20]

³⁹ Husain Abdul Aziz Mohamed was 20 years old when he was arrested by Bahraini authorities in 2015. Since his imprisonment he has been subjected to torture and denied eye surgery which would have prevented the deterioration of his vision. As a result of inaction he was designated legally blind in 2019. Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (2019). *Profiles in persecution: Husain Abdul Aziz Mohamed*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2019/05/profiles-in-persecution-husain-abdulaziz-mohamed/> [Accessed: 07/09/20]

⁴⁰ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (2019). *HRC38 Oral Intervention: Item 3 GD: Denial of healthcare to prisoners in Bahrain*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2018/06/hrc38-oral-intervention-denial-of-healthcare-to-prisoners-in-bahrain/> [Accessed: 25/08/20]

Physical and psychological torture are widespread, well-documented realities of political detainment in Bahrain. In some cases, episodes of torture have turned into unintentional death scenarios, as was the case of Hassan Jassim Hasan Al-Hayki who died while in custody in 2016.⁴¹ Although a number of interventions, campaigns, and international calls have been made,⁴² the practice of torture has persisted, continually targeting political prisoners.

Abdulahdi al-Khawaja is a Danish-Bahraini citizen who belongs to a high-risk group of political prisoners in terms of physical and psychological health.⁴³ According to international law, he has been illegally detained for almost a decade and has suffered physical, sexual, and psychological torture as a result. One episode of torture left Mr. Al-Khawaja requiring surgery to implant 18 plates and approximately 40 screws in his face.⁴⁴ He faces major health problems such as blindness and blood clots. Despite his serious condition, the authorities refuse to provide him with necessary medical attention. Sheikh Mohamed Habib al-Muqdad, another political prisoner and a Swedish citizen, was diagnosed with cancer in 2013 and is still awaiting treatment. Similarly, Hajer Mansoor, detained in reprisal for the human rights activities of her son-in-law in Europe, was denied access to medical follow-up after a potentially cancerous lump was found in her breast in August 2018.⁴⁵ The institutionalized severity of treatment in Bahraini prisons and denial of medical care accentuates the mental and physical fragility of detainees. Recommendations for changing healthcare in Bahrain's Third Cycle UPR included 115.110 and 115.120, which called for the release of political prisoners, the end of violence and impunity, as well as the specific release of Abdulhadi al-Khawaja and transfer back to Denmark. However, no effective change has been undertaken by the authorities.

III. Right to Adequate Standard of Living

Article 11(1) of the ICESCR obliges signatory states to ensure the right of their population to an adequate standard of living. This right is also safeguarded by Article 25(1) of the UDHR.⁴⁶ Article 11(1) specifies the criteria conducive to the fulfilment of such a right, consisting of access to adequate food, clothing, housing, and the continuous improvement of living conditions, as well as sustained access to social services.⁴⁷ Although Article 10(a) of the Bahraini Constitution provides that "the national economy is based on social justice,"⁴⁸ Bahraini society is both polarized and highly unequal.

⁴¹ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy and Bahrain Center for Human Rights (2016). *Collective Efforts: International calls for accountability and reform in Bahrain*. Available at: http://bahrainrights.org/sites/default/files/BCHR_Collective.pdf [Accessed: 18/08/20]

⁴² Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (2019). *UN Experts Express "Grave Concern" at denial of medical care for Bahrain's political prisoners*. Available at: <https://www.adhrb.org/2019/11/un-experts-express-grave-concern-at-denial-of-medical-care-for-bahrains-political-prisoners/> [Accessed: 07/09/20]

⁴³ DIGNITY (2018). *DIGNITY believes: We must not let time run out for the Danish-Bahrain human rights activist*. Available at: <https://www.dignity.dk/nyheder/dignity-mener-vi-maa-ikke-lade-tiden-loebe-ud-for-dansk-bahrainsk-menneskerettighedsforkeamper/> [Accessed: 20/08/20]

⁴⁴ Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (2014). *Freedom for the Bahraini 13: Abdulhadi al-Khawaja*. Available at: <http://birdbh.org/abdulahdi-al-khawaja/> [Accessed: 13/10/20]

⁴⁵ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (2019). *Breaking the Silence: Bahraini Women Political Prisoners Expose Systemic Abuses*. Available at: https://usercontent.one/wp/www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ADHRB_BreakingTheSilence_Web.pdf [Accessed: 07/10/20]

⁴⁶ United Nation Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf [Accessed 16/09/20].

⁴⁷ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (1966). *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cescr.pdf> [Accessed 16/09/20].

⁴⁸ Comparative Constitutions Project (2016). *Bahrain's Constitution of 2002 with Amendments through 2012*. Available at: <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/bah117079.pdf> [Accessed 17/09/20].

Discrimination, characterized by a series of structural obstacles, are faced by a large proportion of the population, notably Shia Muslims, who struggle for equal access to education and the labour market.⁴⁹ This is an even greater challenge for *Ajam*, who in addition to their religion, face marginalization and mistrust on account of their Persian ethnolinguistic heritage. This is reflected broadly by their socio-economic status and visibly through their lower standards of living. In the domain of employment, the MOI requests candidates to provide a copy of their marriage certificate.⁵⁰ This is the only document that explicitly displays the religion of an individual. This is used as a method to remove Shia candidates in an attempt to ensure loyalty to the government. This constitutes a breach of Article 2(2) of the ICESCR, which provides for the exercise of the rights outlined in the Covenant “without discrimination of any kind.” This discrimination is also observed through the phenomenon that 56% of Bahraini nurses remain unemployed for three years after graduation, while the Ministry of Labour employs foreigners from Sunni countries to fill vacancies. This in violation of Article 1 of the 1958 ILO Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation.⁵¹

Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, thousands of Bahraini citizens (predominantly Shia) were dismissed from their jobs for having taken part in pro-democracy demonstrations.⁵² This is in blatant violation of Articles 2(2) and 6(1) of the ICESCR, which safeguard political and economic freedoms. Although Bahrain has been confronted by the international community and has since worked to reinstate dismissed workers, this has not been fully implemented, with many individuals neither reinstated nor compensated for job loss.

Since 2011, there has also been a gradual politicization of access to higher education. Before the mass demonstrations, university scholarships were granted based on academic merit. Since then, the system has been modified, with selection now conducted through an interview process. Questions concerning the religious affiliation of the student’s household and their loyalty to the royal family are now recurring features of the interview process. This contravenes Article 13 of the Covenant, ensuring equal access to education regardless of religious or political disposition. These types of political and sectarian barriers in education have longstanding repercussions. As the access to education is hindered, so too is competitiveness in the labour market, negatively affecting the ability to gain employment and ameliorate living standards.

The situation with housing suffers from a similar rhetoric. While the Shia community has suffered housing shortages since the 1980s, Sunni workers from abroad, commonly from Jordan, Egypt, and Pakistan, are employed *en masse* and receive direct access to quality housing. These foreign workers are largely recruited into the police and military, but also fill government administration positions. They benefit from a fast-tracked naturalization process and, in addition to housing, receive access to other social services which are often difficult to obtain for the resident Shia population. While Article 9(f) of the Bahraini Constitution provides that “the State shall endeavour to provide housing for citizens with limited income”,⁵³ housing remains a persistent issue among low-income families. There are countless cases of families living in substandard unsafe conditions, sometimes occupying only a single room. Many have no choice but to live in prefabricated shelters, continually awaiting government maintenance projects or other reconstruction work. Current estimates suggest approximately 10,000 Bahraini citizens are living in 2,000 slums across the

⁴⁹ Abdelbaki, H. (2012). An analysis of Income Inequality and Education Inequality in Bahrain. *Modern Economy*, 3, pp. 675-685.

⁵⁰ Alsabeehg, Z. (2017). *From Citizen to Non-Existent: A study of Bahrain’s politics of citizenship*. Available at: https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/57636/MASTERTHESIS_BAHRAIN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [Accessed 12/10/20].

⁵¹ Al-Wasat (February 2017). *56% of graduated nurses without a job after three years*. Available at: <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1214651.html>. [Accessed 12/10/20]

⁵² Al-jazeera (April 2011). *Bahrain workers fired for supporting protests*. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2011/4/6/bahrain-workers-fired-for-supporting-protests> [Accessed 12/10/20]

⁵³ Comparative Constitutions Project (2016). *Bahrain’s Constitution of 2002 with Amendments through 2012*. Available at: <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/bah117079.pdf> [Accessed 16/09/20]

country.⁵⁴

Besides the Shia and *Ajam*, Bidoon communities are also acutely vulnerable to housing discrimination as social welfare programs require Bahraini citizenship. The lack of government support for those considered stateless, and the sizable denaturalization campaigns since 2015, are incompatible with Articles 2(2) and 11(1) of the Covenant. Additionally, the Bidoon communities, due to their stateless status, do not receive access to publicly funded schools. This has forced Bidoon families, if they can afford to do so, to save money in order to send one of their children to private school. Due to financial restrictions and the traditional attitudes of the country, girls' education is often neglected. Other social services conducive to the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living are also inaccessible for Bidoons. For example, the lack of action toward naturalizing historical Bidoon communities is a violation of the right to nationality, and thus in direct breach of Article 11(1) of the Covenant and Article 15(1) of the UDHR.

A significant proportion of Bahrain's population is comprised of migrant workers. They constitute over 77% of the Bahraini workforce and account for a third of the total population.⁵⁵ Unlike those recruited into the sectors previously mentioned, the accommodation of migrant workers – especially those in construction – does not observe the bare minimum requirements for what can be considered suitable housing. Illegal labour housing sites typically have an inferior structure, are overcrowded, have poor sanitation, and lack emergency exits. Between 2012 and 2014, twenty-six Bangladeshi migrant workers died in fires that broke out in illegal housing facilities. In 2014 the authorities officially recognised 600 unregistered buildings in Manama alone,⁵⁶ and promised to tackle the problem of illegal housing; this is yet to be undertaken. The COVID-19 pandemic has added another dimension of danger to the situation faced by migrant workers, as they have been forced to quarantine in unsafe and crowded conditions, while simultaneously attracting blame for aggravating the spread of the virus.⁵⁷ In Bahrain's Third Cycle UPR recommendations, Malaysia issued recommendation 115.165, asking the authorities to "continue their efforts in ensuring that the housing conditions of workers be continuously inspected and monitored." Although the Bahraini government accepted this recommendation, to date there has been little tangible progress. This is a clear violation of the migrant population's right to an adequate standard of living, contravening both Article 11(1) of the Covenant and Article 38 of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action against the discrimination of migrants.⁵⁸

The prison population is another group whose rights are continually undermined in terms of adequate food and housing. Credible reports have been recorded in Jau Prison indicating that prison authorities close the water supply as a means of reprisal, sometimes for up to four consecutive days. Notably in July 2018, when Bahrain recorded its highest temperatures since 1902, the staff of Jau Prison reportedly cut off water supplies for inmates, leaving them with one cup of water a day. The inmates, to avoid dehydration, were subsequently forced to drink water from the unsanitary toilets, only increasing health risks. Similarly, rotten food is known to be distributed to prisoners, particularly prisoners of conscience. This not only attracts insects but can also cause food poisoning. Compounded by the general state of the inmate's poor health, the

⁵⁴ Al-Wasat (26 April 2016). The House of Representatives failed to provide justice to the owners of the ramshackle homes. <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1107161.html> [Accessed 12/10/20]

⁵⁵ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (2017). *Living as Commodities*. Available at: https://usercontent.one/wp/www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ADHRB_Commodities_Web.pdf [Accessed 16/09/20].

⁵⁶ MFA Asia (2013). *Fire Accident in Bahrain Tragically took the lives of 13 Bangladeshi Migrant Workers*. Available at: <https://mfasia.org/fire-accident-in-bahrain-that-tragically-took-the-lives-of-13-bangladeshi-workers/> [Accessed on 07/10/20].

⁵⁷ Amnesty International (2020). *Covid-19 makes Gulf Countries' abuse of Migrant Workers Impossible to Ignore*.

⁵⁸ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2002). *World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance: Declaration and Program of Action*. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Durban_text_en.pdf [Accessed on 18/09/20]

expired food causes stomach pains, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea.⁵⁹ Such treatment violates Articles 20(1) and 20(2) of the UN Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.⁶⁰ Alongside compromising physical health, the psychological integrity of the inmates also suffers greatly. This has wider consequences for their ability to reintegrate into society and work towards their betterment, including the improvement of their standards of living. Post-traumatic stress disorders are frequent among such individuals and have far-reaching consequences throughout their lives, again contravening the right to the highest attainable standard of mental health outlined in Article 12(1) of the Covenant and Article 25(1) of the UDHR.

An adequate standard of living correlates with a strong commitment to human dignity, a concept which fails to be upheld in the widespread human trafficking activities and abuse of migrant workers. Upon arrival in Bahrain, many foreign workers find themselves trapped in an exploitative system and used as commodities. Common abuses include the terms of their contract being modified without notification, forms of indenture resulting from administrative fees they were not legally liable to pay, denial of contact with the external world, and in some cases, prevention from returning to their home countries.

Labour Law No. 1 (2008) and Law No. 36 (2012) have proven ineffectual in addressing the structural dangers faced by migrant workers. Additionally, the Labour Migration Regulatory Authority (LMRA) often overlooks the complaints it receives and has failed to effectively revoke the *Kafala* system.⁶¹ This system ties the fate of workers to their employers and the legality of their stay to their contract, making it virtually impossible to resist employer abuses. In a system where workers lack the freedom of mobility, they can be exposed to violence and exploitation, in breach of Article 6(1) of the Covenant and Article 23(1) of the UDHR, pertaining to the freedom to choose employment. There are numerous accounts of underpayment and wages being completely withheld, in violation of Article 7(a) regarding the right to obtain fair remuneration for labour. Without legal protections and the effective abolition of the *Kafala* system, migrant workers are commonly trapped, exposed to unsafe conditions and dangerous living standards, with their right to “the continuous improvement of living standards” roundly denied.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Kingdom of Bahrain consistently fails to meet its international commitments under the ICESCR to protect the right of self-determination, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, and the right to an adequate standard of living. By acceding to the Covenant in 2007, the Bahraini authorities acknowledged these rights and committed to take the required measures to both promote and prevent a denial of them. The Government of Bahrain must take firm, effective, and serious steps to bring its laws and practices into compliance with the Covenant.

ADHRB and IDO therefore calls on the Government of Bahrain to implement the following recommendations:

⁵⁹ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (2019). *Breaking the Silence: Bahraini Women Political Prisoners Expose Systemic Abuses*. Available at: https://usercontent.one/wp/www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ADHRB_BreakingTheSilence_Web.pdf [Accessed on 18/09/20].

⁶⁰ United Nations General Assembly (1957). *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/UN_Standard_Minimum_Rules_for_the_Treatment_of_Prisoners.pdf [Accessed: 07/10/20]

⁶¹ Although Bahraini authorities announced in May 2009 that they would repeal the *Kafala* system, various NGOs and newspapers independently investigated the situation and found that migrant workers have retained a vulnerable legal status, and that the responsibility of their presence in Bahrain still falls upon the employer. Migrants Rights (2017). *Bahrain to Introduce Self-Sponsorship System in April*. Available at: <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2017/03/bahrain-to-introduce-self-sponsorship-system-in-april/> [Accessed 16/09/20]

- Ratify without reservations the main human rights instruments to which the country is not yet a party;
- Ensure that citizens have equal access to the political sphere and representation in the Shura Council, regardless of their political or religious affiliations;
- Guarantee the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all persons, without discrimination and without excluding the stateless populations such as Bidoon and other non-citizens;
- Pursue democratic electoral reforms; explicitly, the reinstatement of dissolved political opposition groups and the redrawing of electoral districts to ensure proper political representation;
- Cease the harassment, arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, and mistreatment of individuals for political and religiously motivated reasons;
- Enact and uphold legislation guaranteeing the right to freedom of expression, assembly, and association, and reform existing laws by removing overly broad definitions and language that contradict or fails to comply with international human rights law;
- Immediately release journalists, political leaders, human rights defenders, and prisoners of conscience, including Sheikh Ali Salman and Abdulhadi al-Khawaja. Moreover, accord them an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations and a complete expunging of their criminal records in accordance with international law;
- Call for the reinstatement of independent journalism and allow journalists to perform their work without hindrance and intimidation;
- Renounce the policy of militarizing healthcare and respect the inviolable neutrality of medical personnel. Restore civilian control of public healthcare facilities and services, including ambulances;
- Reinstatement dismissed medical staff and accord them fair compensation and reparations;
- Equalize health care quality across Bahrain's public hospitals and develop healthcare facilities. This includes correcting poor management practices, building wards, investing in equipment and hiring professionally qualified medical staff;
- Ensure greater equality and social justice by raising the standards of living for the Shia-affiliated population, including *Ajam* communities;
- Grant equal access to education by depoliticizing the scholarship system and hire proportional levels of Shia citizens in the police force, military, and public administration;
- Ensure adequate standards of living for migrants by abolishing the *Kafala* system, both in law and practice, and establish channels of assistance to migrant workers;
- Enforce stronger legislation on the endemic issue of illegal migrant labour camps;

- Initiate clear procedures to determine the number of stateless individuals in Bahrain, particularly amongst Bidoon communities;
- Take steps to ensure access to citizenship for those who have been determined stateless, restore citizenship where it has been deprived, and amend laws to prevent deprivation of nationality; and
- Cooperate with UN Procedures and allow Special Rapporteurs to conduct country visits.