

BAHRAIN

Issued by the "Bahrain Freedom Movement" to promote human and constitutional rights

Salutations to the fasting Bahraini medics and political prisoners

In a totally different and probably alien health environment, Muslims welcomed the holy month of Ramadan with a spirit of deep faith and eagerness to worship, but also with subdued social environment unseen in living memory. The Covid-19 pandemic has proven more deadly and difficult to deal with than had been anticipated by many, especially the US president who had repeatedly brushed it aside. While the elderly are probably most at risk in the open societies, the political prisoners in our region, especially Bahrain and Saudi Arabia are in even greater danger of contracting the diseases. The Bahraini torture cells house many elderly and sick pro-democracy activists like Hassan Mushaima, Mohammad Hassan Parweez and Sheikh Abdul Jalil Al Miqdad. The first two are in their seventies with underlying health conditions, the third is in his sixties.. These people are condemned to live in filthy rooms and corridors that well below the expected standards expected by bodies like the Red Cross. The advent of Ramadan is yet another challenge to these people who are locked away from their beloved ones, denied access to religious books and under constant threats and intimidation by the agents of the criminal khalifi household. Several issues need to be highlighted here:

As the hearts of the believers throb as they seek to practice real worship and ascend with feelings of love and expectation towards God Almighty, the mothers, wives and siblings of the Bahraini detainees experience deeper anxieties as they attempt to brush aside the horrible sense that their beloved ones behind bars may catch the deadly disease. These women have been denied access to the prisoners due to the spread of Covid-19 and allowed limited visual calls which are marred by extreme forms of censorship in the presence of the torture officers alongside the prisoners. Fasting deepens the sense of freedom in the hearts and minds of the believers, as it makes them less reliant on others for their daily subsistence. Experiencing hunger and thirst during the day elevates the spirit of freedom and independence, thus diminishing the tendency to glorify tyrants, dictators and despots. The spirit of mass fasting is far beyond anyone's imaginations. In addition to the health benefits, fasting enables the person to feel deeper sense of liberation from the material needs of the body and mind. It leads to a spirit of rebellion against those who treat mankind

with disdain and subjugation. Only God Almighty is the sustainer, the provider and the feeder. Everyone else, especially in the realm of Covid-19 becomes powerless. Even UK's prime minister cannot protect himself against this minute creature called coronavirus, despite the availability of the best of the human care and protection. The whole world is now in limbo, hoping for a miracle to salvage it from what appears sometime to be the inevitable end of mankind.

Among the requirement of proper and righteous worship is belief in the "unseen" which implies that God laws which control the natural laws always apply and are not bound by time or space. From a religious perspective, this universe is controlled by the power of God through His laws. These laws always work. True fasting is that which leads the worshipper to believe in God's power through his laws that always work. The faithful is guided to transform his perceptions and become unfearful of anyone except God who has the absolute power. His laws apply forcefully to those who present themselves as gods and retain absolute power over people. The faithful believe that these despots are subject to the divine laws that imply the ultimate fall of tyranny, and that oppression lies at the heart of the causes of the downfall of oppressors. The fate of people is not in the hands of those powerless men; but in the hands of God through His laws. The believe that dictators, despots and oppressors are destined for eventual punishment creates new realities in the life of people. Justice will always prevail, truth will come out, fallacy will perish and despotism will end. These are lessons that must be deduced from fasting in accordance to the Quranic verses, which Muslims believe to represent the absolute and complete truth.

This year Ramadan is riddled with Covid-19 pandemic that has paralysed the whole world. The lockdown means that get-together events even at family levels will not be possible. Mosques are closed so are all other venues that attract mass gatherings. This provides an opportunity to perform worship in isolation from the material world. For the political prisoners it is an opportunity to revisit the spiritual realm to draw on its strengths in order to continue fighting for freedom and justice. Bahrain prisoners face alarming prospects of infection and certain death. There has been sustained campaigns to call for their freedom but the khalifi tyrant rejected all pleas for emptying his torture

chambers. UN Human Rights Council and Commissioner have called for prisoners to be released, but these calls have not been heeded. The activists will continue their campaign and will expose the regime's brutality and lack of human feelings or compassion. The lack of prevention or cure of the disease means that once the pandemic breaks out in the filthy and unhygienic environment of the jails there will most certainly disastrous results. The khalifi regime has been battling with the outbreaks among the expatriate workers and attempting to hide the true picture of the spread of the disease. Bahraini doctors who had been subjected to most horrific treatment in 2011 including imprisonment, torture and dismissal are at the frontline, fighting the disease while the khalifi dictators remained shielded behind the walls of their palaces, away from people.

The Bahraini rulers have plundered the wealth of the country over the years. Now the treasury is depleted and is in danger of total bankruptcy as the oil prices collapsed in recent weeks. With an all-time low price of less than \$20 the prospect of recovery of the balance sheet appears extremely remote in the foreseeable future. The Covid-19 spread and the world's lockdown in addition the demand for oil has fallen sharply. The Saudis made the situation worse and compounded the crisis by increasing their production and the flooding of the market beyond the point of saturation. They are now reaping the bitter results that could lead to social eruption. Bahrain's khalifi dictators continue to treat the natives in the same old ways of repression, revenge and sometimes with genocidal policies. These are recipes for greater disasters than anything that happened in the past. While wishing everyone happy Ramadan, we salute the bravery of the Bahraini medical staff who battle the pandemic with bravery and dedication. We also commend the bravery of the native Bahraini prisoners and those stranded outside the country as they continue to raise their heads high, insist on achieving real political transformation and refuse to bow to the pressures of the dysfunctional dictatorship. We pray for those who lost their lives in the pandemic worldwide and pray for a speedy success in the battle against the fast spreading Covid-19.

Public outrage as pandemic threatens jails in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia

A letter from the notorious Bahrain's Jaw Prison has been smuggled out to tell the world how the situation inside had become so dire as filth, lack of sanitation or medical care swept through its overcrowded corridors. The cells that had been designed for four inmates have up to 12 prisoners. The letter described the lack of humanity in the hearts of the khalifi dictators who are determined to let coronavirus disease spread further among the political prisoners. Mothers of detainees have continued their calls for their sons to be let out of the torture chambers, but to no avail. The mother of Mohammad Al Daqqaq who suffers from acute sickle cell disease has called on the regime to tell her about his fate. He has not been heard of for over ten days. He is serving 16 years sentence for opposing the hereditary dictatorship. The mother of Ali Abbas Abdul IthnaAshar from Duraz, was horrified when she saw her son's condition after receiving a visual call from prison. She immediately cut off the line and shouted: What have you done to my son? Visual calls have replaced face-to-face visits which have been stopped because of the pandemic. Another inmate, Ali Al Ghanmi has also been disappeared after protesting the degrading treatment at the hands of the officials. When he complained that the torturers were not wearing masks during interrogation, one of them replied: We want you all infected. He was then led away for more torture.

The mother of Sayed Adnan Sayed Majid has appealed to local and international NGOs for action to free prisoners before the spread of coronavirus. Calls by women activists were made for the last woman prisoner of conscience, Zakiya Al Barbouri to be set free after serving more than two years behind bars for opposing the khalifi regime. The family of Ayman Naji who is

servicing life imprisonment imposed by the khalifis for his opposition is calling on them to tell her about the fate of her other son, Salman after he was forcibly disappeared.

Many prisoners have now developed serious illnesses as a result of lack of medical care. Ali Sanqoor, has now lost his hearing completely. Despite his pleas for treatment for the past seven years prison officials denied him proper treatment. Hassan Ali Ibrahim Al Jouki has developed severe psychological complications after years of ill-treatment. He is gradually losing his memory.

A senior cleric has had his detention extended after five weeks in incarceration for presenting different view on history from what the regime holds. Sheikh Abdul Mohsin Mulla Atiya's appeal session this week was postponed until 1st June while he remains behind bars. Salman Naji, a native Bahraini has been remanded in custody for 15 days by regime's prosecutors. He had been detained because he joined others chanting for the release of native Bahrainis incarcerated at khalifi torture dungeons. The death of a frontline activist on 19th April while helping the stranded Bahrainis in Iran has led to an outcry against the regime which has failed to help native Bahrainis stranded in other countries. Ahmad Al Karrani, a native Bahraini had volunteered to help his fellow countrymen in the holy city of Mashad and was infected with the disease. He was in his early thirties.

Last week human rights activist, Sayed Ahmed Al Wadaei was declared joint winner of Index on Censorship Award for his relentless efforts to defend native Bahraini victims of khalifi torture apparatus. "The price for expressing yourself in Bahrain is very high. I myself ended up in prison for speaking to the press during the Arab Spring and Bahrain has jailed members of my fami-

ly to silence me," he commented.

Bahrain which was rated junk by all the three major credit rating agencies, secured a loan of about \$1 billion last month from a group of local and international banks and used it to repay \$1.25 billion in bonds that matured on March 31. The government could post a fiscal deficit of 15.7% of GDP this year from a 10.6% deficit in 2019, according to the International Monetary Fund, while the economy could contract by 3.6%.

On 17th April Amnesty International said that the Saudi authorities must immediately release Dr Abdullah al-Hamid, a prisoner of conscience who remains in a critical condition after slipping into coma last week. He is a prominent human rights campaigner serving an 11-year sentence for his peaceful activism. On 9th April he suffered a stroke and is currently at the intensive care unit at al-Shumaisi Hospital in Riyadh. "It is heartbreakingly cruel that Dr Abdullah al-Hamid remains in detention, even while in a coma," said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Middle East Research Director.

On 17th April Human Rights Watch said: Saudi Arabia's mass trial of 68 Jordanian and Palestinian residents raises serious due process concerns amid accusations of abuse. In March 2018, Saudi authorities carried out a wave of arrests targeting a group of long-term Palestinian and Jordanian residents in the country based on vague allegations of links with an unnamed "terrorist organization." After holding some of the detainees for nearly two years without charge, Saudi authorities began a mass trial behind closed doors on March 8, 2020 at the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
22nd April 2020

Political prisoners could die of COVID19 in Bahraini & Saudi jails

On 10th April US Senators Christopher Murphy, Marco Rubio and 15 other senators told Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and other repressive regimes not to use prisoners "as bargaining chips" during the #COVID19 crisis, in a powerful bipartisan call to release political prisoners "on humanitarian grounds". In a letter to US Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo they said: We urge you to publicly call for the release of American and political prisoners locked up abroad on baseless charges and raise their cases with your counterparts. This is not the time for those regimes to use people's lives as bargaining chips, it is time to provide humanitarian relief as we face the blocae threat of COVID-19". A similar call was made by UK MPs. On 9th April Brendan O'Hara the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf, wrote to the Bahraini ambassador supporting the 20+ Human Rights groups who have called for the immediate and unconditional release of

all political prisoners currently at risk from COVID-19 in Bahraini jails.

On 9th April Reuters dispatched a long news story about the predicament of Bahraini political prisoners inside the khalifi torture chambers. It said: "Western-allied Bahrain has come under pressure from human rights organisations over prison conditions including overcrowding, poor sanitation and lack of medical care. In common with other countries in the Middle East and beyond, it has freed some prisoners considered at risk, such as pregnant women, in response to the epidemic. The country has recorded more than 800 COVID-19 cases with five deaths. But the around 1,500 freed so far exclude individuals jailed on national security grounds. Rights groups including Amnesty International last week jointly called Bahraini authorities to release those who "peacefully exercised their rights to freedom of expression", especially elderly prisoners or those with existing health conditions. "The au-

thorities don't like to be seen to bend to political pressure," said Marc Owen Jones of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter.

On 19th April The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists called on Bahraini authorities to immediately stop retaliating against imprisoned journalist Mahmoud al-Jaziri for reporting on conditions inside Bahraini prisons and should free all journalists imprisoned for their work, the Committee to Protect Journalists said today. Al-Jaziri, who according to CPJ research has been imprisoned since December 2015 and is serving a 15-year prison sentence on charges of belonging to a "terrorist" group, recorded an audio clip in which he disputed reports that Bahraini authorities had taken measures to protect prisoners from the spread of COVID-19 and that in-person family visits for prisoners have been replaced by video calls. Khalifi torturers have revenged from political prisoners who contradicted the asser-

Twitter targets Saudi fake news, Bahrain urged to free political prisoners

Twitter has removed a network of 5,350 accounts linked to the Saudi monarchy operating out of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Together they had tweeted 36.5m times praising the Saudi leadership or criticising Qatar, Turkey and Iran. The takedown of the accounts followed a tip from the Stanford Internet Observatory, which said that network had also generated tweets supportive of the Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar. "Prominent narratives included discrediting recent Libyan peace talks, criticizing the Syrian government, criticizing Iranian influence in Iraq, praising the Mauritanian government, and criticism of Houthi rebels in Yemen," the observatory said in a blog-post. Twitter said that the fake accounts had been used to "amplify messaging critical of Iran, Qatar and Turkey".

Amnesty International has called on Saudi Arabia to free jailed activists. It said: Our research shows that through the deeply instrumentalized 'Specialized Criminal Court' peaceful activists, religious clerics, and members of the Shi'a minority are often unfairly tried, given lengthy prison sentences, and even sentenced to death based on "confessions" extracted under torture. Several have been executed. This court is the government's tool for muzzleing critical voices in Saudi Arabia. In November 2020 Saudi Arabia will host the G20 Leaders' Summit in Riyadh, where the wealthiest and most powerful countries come together to address global issues. This is an opportunity to increase the pressure on King Salman and the Saudi government to undertake meaningful human rights reforms, not just a PR campaign. If enough people act to show their support of Saudi heroes being prosecuted by the gov-

ernment, the King will have to listen.

On 6th April The Committee to Protect Journalists joined other human rights and free expression organizations in a letter calling on the Bahraini government to release all imprisoned journalists and other political prisoners. The letter notes the notoriously poor conditions in Bahraini prisons, including overcrowding and lack of medical care, and cites the Bahraini government's recent decision to pardon 1,486 prisoners (including 250 political detainees) to stem the spread of COVID-19 in the country's penal system. At least six journalists were imprisoned for their work in Bahrain at the time of CPJ's most recent prison census. CPJ has documented the cases of Abduljalil al-Singace, who has repeatedly been denied access to adequate medical care despite his deteriorating health, and Ahmed Humaidan, who has suffered persistent eye infections in Jaw Central Prison.

Last night Bahraini people mobilized their efforts to get the prisoners released amid the worrying news that the virus is spreading fast among inmates. They engaged in a campaign on social media with the hashtag #FreeBahrainiprisoners. Mothers, sisters and other relatives tweeted calls for their release. Heartbreaking pleas were made, video clips of weeping mothers were distributed and calls by opposition figures inside the country and exile were highlighted. Fear is gripping the country as the regime attempts to suppress the news of the real extent of its spread. On 4th April citizens chanted "Allahu Akbar" from rooftops as part of the campaign to release the political prisoners. While the khalifi tribal regime insists that it has the capacity to deal with the pandemic, it has refused to repatriate thousands of citizens abroad with over 2000 in Iran. Bahraini

students in India have been asking to be repatriated but the regime refused to make adequate arrangements to bring them back. In this context it says that it does not have the capacity to test them.

On 6th April an open letter was signed by 19 international NGOs including Human Rights Watch calling on the Bahraini authorities to release human rights defenders, opposition activists, journalists, and all others imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association. "Authorities must now speedily release those who never should have been in jail in the first place, namely all prisoners of conscience who remain detained solely for exercising their right to peaceful expression", said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Middle East director of research. "We also urge the authorities to step up measures to ensure full respect for the human rights of all those deprived of their liberty." Opposition leaders imprisoned for their roles in the 2011 protest movement remain behind bars. These include Hassan Mushaima, Abdulwahab Hussain, Abdulhadi Al Khawaja, Dr Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, Sheikh Ali Salman, Nabeel Rajab and Naji Fateel. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience who should be released.

Despite the coronavirus crisis, the khalifi tribal regime has continued to jail citizens who oppose its dictatorship. On 1st April three native Bahrainis were sentenced to 15 years jail and fines of over half a million dollars. Hussain Hammad, 22, Mohammad Essa Al Muhandis and Sayed Ali Sayed Jalil, 20 were severely tortured.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
8th April 2020



tion by regime's human rights GANGO that jail conditions were good. Hussain Ali, Hassan Atiya and Hussain Al Jaziri are being punished in various ways. Families are fearful for their children as coronavirus began to spread in jails.

Prominent Saudi reformer Abdullah al-Hamid, 69, is in a coma after suffering a stroke last week in prison. He was moved from prison to intensive care when his condition deteriorated. Calls have been

made for his immediate release along with all political prisoners) and provide him with the necessary medical care.

On 8th April, Reprieve issued a statement about executions in Saudi Arabia. It said: On April 8, 2020, Saudi Arabia carried out the 800th execution since 2015, in the reign of King Salman bin Abdulaziz. The rate of executions has doubled under his rule. Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman said the Kingdom intends to "minimise" the number of executions. This latest grim milestone shows that the opposite is in fact the case." Maya Foa, Director of Reprieve, said: "For all the rhetoric of reform and modernisation, Saudi Arabia is still a country where speaking out against the King can get you killed. In the run-up to the G20 summit in Riyadh in November, the Kingdom's western partners must demand an end to the execution of children and political opponents, otherwise they risk tacitly endorsing these flagrant violations of international law."

Calls have also been made to UAE authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Dr Nasser bin Ghaith after his sharp health deterioration over the past few days. Dr bin Ghaith has recently suffered from

hypertension as he was left without medical care while in prison, making him more vulnerable to the COVID-19. He is serving a 10-year sentence for criticizing the UAE in comments posted on Twitter after a grossly unfair politically motivated trial.

Today marks six years since award-winning lawyer and activist Waleed Abulkhair was arrested in Saudi Arabia. Six years later, he is continuing to serve a 15-year prison sentence for his peaceful activism. A campaign to send messages of support to Waleed and call for his immediate release has been launched.

Yesterday, Saudi forces killed an innocent man who refused to leave his home in an area that MBS had designated for his Nekom project. Abdul Rahim Al Huwaity from the village of "Khraiba" in Northwest Saudi Arabia refused to leave his home and was shot dead by the security forces who wanted all inhabitants of the village to evacuate their homes. It was a cold-blooded murder of a man who clung to the only thing he owns in the oil-rich kingdom, his family home.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
15th April 2020

Bahrain: Free Imprisoned Rights Defenders and Opposition Activists

April 6, 2020 12:00AM EDT

(Beirut) – Amid the global threat posed by COVID-19, Bahraini authorities should release human rights defenders, opposition activists, journalists, and all others imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association, a coalition of 19 rights groups, including Human Rights Watch, said today.

On March 17, 2020, Bahrain completed the release of 1,486 prisoners, 901 of whom received royal pardons on “humanitarian grounds.” The remaining 585 were given non-custodial sentences. While this is a positive step, the releases so far have excluded opposition leaders, activists, journalists, and human rights defenders – many of whom are older and/or suffer from underlying medical conditions. Such prisoners are at high risk of serious illness if they contract COVID-19, and thus ought to be prioritized for release.

“Bahrain’s significant release of prisoners is certainly a welcome relief as concerns around the spread of COVID-19 continue to rise. Authorities must now speedily release those who never should have been in jail in the first place, namely all prisoners of conscience who remain detained solely for exercising their right to peaceful expression”, said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International’s Middle East director of research. “We also urge the authorities to step up measures to ensure full respect for the human rights of all those deprived of their liberty.”

Opposition leaders imprisoned for their roles in the 2011 protest movement remain behind bars. These include Hassan Mushaima, the head of the unlicensed opposition group Al-Haq; Abdulwahab Hussain, an opposition leader; Abdulhadi Al Khawaja, a prominent human rights defender; and Dr Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, the spokesman for Al-Haq.

Other prominent opposition figures, including Sheikh Ali Salman, secretary general of the dissolved Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society (Al-Wefaq), also remain imprisoned. Sayed Nizar Alwadaei, who was deemed arbitrarily detained by the United Nations in “reprisal” for the activism of his brother-in-law, the exiled activist Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, and human rights defenders Nabeel Rajab and Naji Fateel have not been released either. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) has documented that a total of 394 detainees of the 1,486 released were imprisoned on political charges. According to Salam for Democracy and Human Rights, another Bahraini nongovernmental group, 57 of the 901 prisoners who received a royal pardon were imprisoned for their political activities, while the rest were given non-custodial sentences. Since

the Bahraini government has not made available any information on the charges for which those ordered released had been convicted, the exact figures cannot be verified. However, it is clear that people imprisoned for nonviolent political activity are in the minority of those released.

Scores of prisoners convicted following unfair trials under Bahrain’s overly broad counterterrorism law have been overlooked and denied early release or alternative penalties, even though other inmates serving considerably longer sentences were freed. This includes Zakiya Al Barboori and Ali Al Hajee, according to the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD).

Conditions in Bahrain’s overcrowded prisons compound the risk of COVID-19 spreading. The lack of adequate sanitation led to a scabies outbreak in Jau Prison – Bahrain’s largest prison – and the Dry Dock Detention Center in December 2019 and January 2020. Almost half of the Dry Dock Detention Center’s prison population was infected. In 2016, a governmental Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission found buildings at Jau Prison to suffer from “bad hygiene,” “insect infestation,” and “broken toilets.”

Furthermore, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN have expressed their concern over the authorities’ persistent failure to provide adequate medical care in Bahrain’s prisons. This has endangered the health of some unjustly imprisoned persons with chronic medical conditions, such as Hassan Mushaima and Dr Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, who may now be at heightened risk of contracting COVID-19.

Hassan Mushaima, 72, has diabetes, gout, heart and prostate problems, and is also in remission for cancer. Prison authorities have routinely failed to take him to appointments due to his refusal to submit to wearing humiliating shackles during transfers to his appointments. International human rights mechanisms have said that the use of restraints on elderly or infirm prisoners who do not pose an escape risk can constitute ill-treatment.

Dr Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, 57, has post-polio syndrome and uses a wheelchair. Prison authorities have also refused to transport him to his medical appointments due to his refusal to wear shackles.

“As the world faces the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, it is more important than ever that the international community work together to contain its spread and ensure that the health and rights of the vulnerable are protected,” said Husain Abdullah, executive director at Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). “Bahrain’s allies, in particular the United Kingdom and United States, should explicitly call on Bahrain to secure the release of all those solely imprisoned for their peaceful opposition to the government.”

States have an obligation to ensure medical care for all those in their custody at least equivalent to that available to the general population and must not deny or limit de-

tainees equal access to preventive, curative, or palliative health care. Given that conditions in detention centers pose a heightened public health risk to the spread of COVID-19, and the persistent failure to provide an adequate level of care to those in their custody, there are grave concerns about whether prison authorities could effectively control the spread of COVID-19 and care for prisoners if there is an outbreak inside Bahrain’s prisons.

The Bahraini authorities should seize the opportunity to immediately and unconditionally release everyone imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to free expression, including Hassan Mushaima, Dr Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Abdulwahab Hussain, Nabeel Rajab, Naji Fateel, and Sheikh Ali Salman. The convictions of those imprisoned following unfair trials – including Sayed Nizar Alwadaei – should be quashed, or at the very least they should be released pending fair retrial.

The risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to those in detention should be a strong factor weighing toward the reduction of the prison population through the release of pretrial detainees, particularly given the poor, unsanitary conditions in Bahrain’s prisons and the inadequate provision of medical care. In addition, prisoners who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19, such as those with underlying medical conditions and the elderly, should be considered for early release, parole, or alternative non-custodial measures as a means to further reduce the prison population and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“Bahrain’s first wave of prison releases was positive, but insufficient,” said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “The authorities should further reduce the prison population by releasing those who are imprisoned solely for their political beliefs or for exercising their right to free speech and peaceful assembly. Meanwhile, the authorities should ramp up efforts to ensure that the remaining prison population has access to the medical care, is protected from transmission, and is provided the information that they need to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Signed by:

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, (ADHRB), Amnesty International, ARTICLE 19, Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), English PEN, European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ECDHR), Global Legal Action Network (GLAN), Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GC4HR), Human Rights First (HRF), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Index on Censorship, International Service For Human Rights (ISHR), PEN America, PEN International, REDRESS